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# **A CRITICAL HISTORY OF MODERN AESTHETICS**





# A CRITICAL HISTORY OF MODERN AESTHETICS

*by the*

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*To*

**VICTOR BASCH**

**Professor at the Sorbonne**

**with respectful and heartfelt  
gratitude**



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## INTRODUCTION

THE twofold purpose of the present work, as first conceived by the author four years ago, was to bridge a gap in English philosophical literature by completing and bringing up to date the elaborate history of Bosanquet, and, besides, if the ambition were not too high, to stimulate and enrich the whole study of aesthetics by means of his personal destructive and constructive criticism.

This involved, in the first place, an historical sketch of the main outline and contour of aesthetic speculation in recent years; to fill in the details and minutiae of research on this subject as it has developed in Europe and the United States since the last decade of the nineteenth century, to take account of every monograph and opusculè on art and beauty published during these years, would have been far beyond the compass of a single volume, not to say outside the limited powers of a single philosopher. In so far as this broad and general sketch has been designed to portray certain authors, such as Fechner and Guyau, already mentioned in the work of Bosanquet, the writer would justify their inclusion on the ground that the scope and substance of their thought had not been adequately depicted by the eminent historian of aesthetics.

Now there is one feature at least in common to the entire modern school of thinking, however many sects and schisms it may reveal, which also serves to distinguish it sharply from its immediate predecessor in the last century, namely the *method* it employs; for it starts, not from nebulous assumptions about the ultimate nature of existence, not from some fragile and disputable hypothesis of metaphysics, not from *a priori* beliefs of any kind whatever, but from the actual aesthetic experience of man as it appears in the universal appreciation of art



to prevent serious confusion. The word "aesthetic" is invariably employed, not in its etymological sense as coextensive with the whole of feeling, but in the technical sense it has acquired in modern philosophy, as tantamount to the entire experience of the beautiful.

The author has found in the *Einleitung in die Ästhetik der Gegenwart* of Meumann and in the *L'Esthétique allemande contemporaine* of Basch, lucid and brilliant guides through the labyrinth of modern aesthetics and art science, while an essay of Bites-Palevitch provided an admirable introduction to contemporary German speculation in this domain; he owes a debt of the deepest gratitude to Dr. H. D. Oakeley for assisting him throughout his entire period of study with her wide philosophical culture and practised critical skill, and to Professor Basch for kindly making accessible vital material that he failed to obtain in this country.

**PART I**  
**HISTORICAL**



# A. SUBJECTIVE THEORIES OF AESTHETICS

## CHAPTER I

### THE THEORY OF EXPRESSION

THE world-wide influence of Croce, the great protagonist of Expressionism, is reflected in this country by the works of two Oxford philosophers, E. F. Carritt and R. G. Collingwood.

The former, in his principal work, gives us a brief historical account of certain types of aesthetic theory, and a yet briefer sketch of his own views on the subject. Beauty, for him, is the expression of emotion, and all such expression, without any exception, is beautiful.<sup>1</sup> But here we must be careful to draw a distinction ignored by Croce himself; for if expression and intuition were really equivalent, any perceptual awareness of real or imaginary objects would be an awareness of beauty, which would appear even in the dreams of sleep and in the listless and incoherent moments of ordinary life.<sup>2</sup>

It follows from this that the beautiful is neither the useful, nor the agreeable, nor the good. Besides, we value beauty for its own sake, whereas the useful is valued for its results; lovely objects please in the mere contemplation and the judgment of taste claims universal validity, whereas judgments on what is agreeable are purely personal and subjective; and, lastly, natural beauty is morally indifferent while ethical standards are irrelevant to art.

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Carritt: *The Theory of Beauty*, p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 287-290.

In spite of the plain man's opposition, the beautiful should be regarded, like the secondary qualities, as purely mental and subjective; the absence of any science of beauty, the variety of our opinions about it, its partial dependence on obvious secondary qualities, are *prima facie* arguments for putting it on the subjective side.<sup>1</sup>

R. G. Collingwood opens his *Outlines* by professing allegiance to Croce.<sup>2</sup> He then tells us that art is "imagination",<sup>3</sup> or "pure imagination",<sup>4</sup> and that imagination is an "activity"<sup>5</sup> which is prior to the logical judgment; thus we find that art, as a spiritual activity, is the first of the five successive stages—artistic, religious, scientific, historical, and philosophical—in the development of man's spiritual life, and that its specific and characteristic feature is pure imagination. But play is "identical with art",<sup>6</sup> so that art and imagination may be described with equal accuracy as play; or, for that matter, as beauty, for "the beautiful is neither more nor less than the imagined".<sup>7</sup>

Let us now pass on to Croce himself. The Aesthetic of the Italian philosopher is partly speculative, partly historical, about a third of the whole being devoted to theory and approximately two-thirds to a history at once critical and expository.

There is no distinction whatever for him between aesthetics and philology, the science of art and that of language, for Aesthetic and Linguistic, conceived as true sciences, are not two distinct things, but one thing only. Philosophy of language and philosophy of art are precisely identical. This follows inevitably from the identity of their object; for language is essentially expression, and

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Carritt: *The Theory of Beauty*, pp. 1–26.

<sup>2</sup> R. G. Collingwood: *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Speculum Mentis*, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> *Speculum Mentis*, p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> *Outlines of a Philosophy of Art*, p. 19.

expression is also the fundamental aesthetic fact.<sup>1</sup> There is, indeed, complete coincidence of art and language, which implies, as is natural, coincidence of aesthetic and of philosophy of language, definable the one by the other and therefore absolutely identical.<sup>2</sup>

Art or beauty is nothing more than "intuition", the pre-conceptual stage of thought, and so entirely distinct from material reality, from the useful, from the pleasant, from moral conduct, and from conceptual knowledge.<sup>3</sup> The two activities which together exhaust the faculties of the mind are theory and practice, to which correspond respectively thinking and volition. Now knowledge is of two different kinds, conceptual and intuitive, and philosophy presupposes the intuitions or images of perception—art, in a word—just as these themselves presuppose the manifold impressions of sense. Practice also is of two distinct kinds; first, with the willing of particular ends, it is economic or useful, and later, with the willing of rational or general ends,<sup>4</sup> it becomes truly moral. The whole practical sphere presupposes the entire sphere of theory, and not vice versa.

But "intuition" is also "expression", for it is quite impossible to separate the image from its physical embodiment, "l'intuizione pura" and "la pura espressione" are indissolubly and for ever one; to intuit is to express and nothing else than to express.<sup>5</sup> It follows that, as regards natural beauty, man is like the mythical Narcissus at the fountain; nature is simply a stimulus to the imagination of the beholder, and to believe otherwise is to commit the fatal error of confounding beauty with

<sup>1</sup> B. Croce: *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, pp. 142, 143.

<sup>2</sup> *The Essence of Aesthetic*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-17; *Saggi Filosofici*, Vol. I, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Aesthetic*, pp. 22-31, 47-54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; *Essence*, p. 41; *Saggi Filosofici*, Vol. I, p. 11; Vol. V, p. 124.

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<sup>4</sup> *Aesthetic*, pp. 22-31, 47-54.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11; *Essence*, p. 41; *Saggi Filosofici*, Vol. I, p. 11; Vol. V, p. 124.



physical facts. But pure intuition is, besides, essentially lyricism, "liricità", which signifies the representation of states of mind, passion, feeling, and personality.<sup>1</sup> The historical section of Croce's *capilavoro* is twice as long as the theoretical; it starts from Graeco-Roman antiquity and ends with modern psychological aesthetic, but it is distinctly summary in its treatment of many thinkers and bristles with dogmatic assertions; the account of the growth of aesthetic speculation in his own country is particularly interesting for us, on account of our ignorance of Italian reflection on this subject.

Gentile, who started in general accord with Croce on the problems of aesthetics,<sup>2</sup> has since elaborated a theory of his own which makes him a formidable adversary and critic of his renowned compatriot. He attempts to revive the well-worn approach of philosophical idealism to art and beauty by setting out from the metaphysical problem of existence; his "actualism", the identification of thought and will in the primordial thinking activity, reminds one forcibly of the "Tatgedanke" of Fichte, and from this unique source he constructs the entire mental and *soi-disant* material universe. This "eternal act" is itself prior to space and time, to multiplicity and diversity, and to an external world which continually opposes itself to a thinking subject;<sup>3</sup> thought and reality are one.<sup>4</sup>

Art, which is the immediate and primitive form of thought, before it reaches philosophy and science, is the starting-point of the spirit that characterizes the infancy of the individual and of the race, and it is, besides, "not the expression or intuition of feeling but feeling itself".<sup>5</sup> And what is feeling? We are told, in answer to our

<sup>1</sup> *Saggi Filosofici*, Vol. I, pp. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> G. Gentile: *Frammenti di estetica e letteratura*, pp. 113-152.

<sup>3</sup> *Philosophy of Art*, pp. 59-65, 83-88, 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

enquiry, that it is both a "je ne sais quoi", "something nobody can exactly define",<sup>1</sup> and, more positively, that "pleasure . . . can be identified with the feeling which is the essence of art".<sup>2</sup> Such assertions as these summarize the doctrine of art as Gentile expounds it in the eloquent pages of his philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy of Art*, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294-295.

## CHAPTER II

### THE THEORY OF PLEASURE

THE problems of aesthetics are envisaged by H. R. Marshall from a purely psychological angle. He starts from an attempt to explain pleasure and pain in general, and the hypothesis he advances is, like that of Grant Allen and Lehmann, essentially physiological. Where the energy of reaction to a stimulus is greater than the equivalent of the energy involved in the stimulus, we have pleasure; where it is less, we have disagreeableness; where there is an exact equalization of the two, we have a state of complete neutrality or indifference.<sup>1</sup> But, if all pleasures have the same origin and cause, they differ profoundly in regard to their duration. Under continuous stimulation we find that the pleasure derived from the lower senses rapidly wanes and is eventually transformed into its polar opposite, into pain; the eye and the ear, on the other hand, are sources of permanent and lasting enjoyment, and such a "stable pleasure" is precisely the special pleasure provided by art and known to us by the name of beauty. "Beauty is relatively stable, or real, pleasure."<sup>2</sup>

It follows naturally that beauty is a "subjective quality", attached to states of reflection, sensation, volition, and emotion, and neither an objective quality of things, like symmetry or order, nor, as the metaphysicians have claimed, the momentary revelation to us of a special aspect of the Absolute.<sup>3</sup>

There is no warrant, either in the realm of goodness, truth, or beauty, for a belief in the existence of absolute

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Marshall: *The Beautiful*, pp. 71, 72.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 78; *Aesthetic Principles*, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Aesthetic Principles*, pp. 1-32; *The Beautiful*, pp. 10-26.

standards, valid for all ages, peoples, and individuals; each man's aesthetic standards are always in the end individualistic, his own peculiar possession, however much they may be altered and perfected by his culture, and by the appreciative attitude he adopts towards the standards of others.<sup>1</sup>

Art is regarded as a product of a special impulse, "the art instinct", which, as distinct from the instincts of flight, imitation, or approach, impels us to do blindly what shall attract by pleasing. Hence, the function of art in the development of human society is social consolidation, or, in the words of E. Grosse, "the strengthening and extension of social cohesion".<sup>2</sup>

M. Porena is another psychological aesthetician; he opens by a discussion of the nature of beauty in general, he then applies his findings to the various arts, and he concludes, in an appendix, with a subtle and destructive criticism of his fellow-countryman, B. Croce.

The beautiful is "that which pleases the mind as an objective value", "ciò che piace all'anima come pregio obbiettivato",<sup>3</sup> that is to say, whatever stirs pleasure in us without any apparent reference to ourselves as the source of the feeling. This naturally excludes purely sensuous enjoyment, and, besides, the things which delight on account of their relation to our personal interests, the useful or economically valuable, the good, that which assuages our scientific curiosity.<sup>4</sup>

Now the objects which rouse aesthetic enjoyment may either, like colour, light, and sound, regularity in spatial forms or in a temporal series, be judged as beautiful in and for themselves, independently of their relation to other representations, or, like a human face, they may be

<sup>1</sup> *The Beautiful*, pp. 150-179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124-149; *Aesthetic Principles*, pp. 52-83.

<sup>3</sup> M. Porena: *Che cos' è il bello?* pp. 16, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-17.

referred directly to another representation and judged in relation to this; we have thus two great varieties of beauty, "il bello immediato" and "il bello di rapporto".<sup>1</sup> Again, we may be concerned either with the physical substance of objects, their shape, size, or colour, "il bello sensibile", or with their spiritual content and significance, life and emotional expressiveness, "il bello interno".<sup>2</sup> The animation of the inanimate occurs usually by means of analogy, but material forms are sometimes expressive of a spiritual life quite apart from association, without any previous conjunction of the two in the experience of the spectator.<sup>3</sup>

A very similar view of the peculiar character of aesthetic pleasure is advanced by G. Santayana. He has applied, in a small volume, the methods of modern introspective psychology to the problems of aesthetics, starting from the mind rapt in the contemplation of beauty.

The aesthetic and the moral are together distinguished from the true because they give rise to judgments of value, determined by feeling, as compared with intellectual judgments determined by brute facts. But the aesthetic judgment is also distinct from the moral judgment, for it is always positive—as contrasted with such negative judgments as those involved in the prevention of suffering—and further, it is always immediate—as contrasted with the mediacy of judgments relating to the general welfare. Aesthetic pleasure, or beauty, differs however from pleasure in general on account of its "objectification", whereby we attribute it to a material object, a survival of an innate animistic and mythological tendency which is analogous to the treatment of subjective sensations as the primary and secondary qualities of an external world.<sup>4</sup> Beauty may thus be defined as "value, positive, intrinsic,

<sup>1</sup> M. Porena: *Che cos' è il bello?* pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 77-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 101, 111.

<sup>4</sup> G. Santayana: *The Sense of Beauty*, pp. 14-52.

and objectified, or, in less technical language, as pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing".<sup>1</sup>

The three sources of beauty in art and nature are the material or stuff of things, which appeals directly to the senses, the arrangement and relations of this material in specific forms—the unity of a manifold—grasped immediately by perception, and lastly, the expressiveness such forms acquire when associated with our past experience; the distinction thus established between our appreciation of sensible material, of abstract form and of associated values, is merely following the ordinary method of psychology, the only one by which it is possible to analyse the mind.<sup>2</sup>

A more heterodox view is that of J. M. Guyau, the poet-philosopher, who attacks vigorously the orthodox tradition in aesthetics from Kant to Spencer, according to which aesthetic enjoyment is necessarily disinterested, free, that is, from all practical and ideal interests. Beauty, according to this writer, is a perception or an action which stimulates our vitality in its three forms of sensation, intelligence, and volition, and which produces pleasure by the rapid awareness of this general stimulation.<sup>3</sup>

There is thus no difference between beauty and pleasure save only in degree and extent of stimulation, so that the enjoyment derived from the useful, from the activity of the lower senses, from organic sensations, and from the satisfaction of our nutritive and reproductive functions, is as definitely included within aesthetic experience as the appreciation of the noblest works of art.<sup>4</sup>

In his later work Guyau discusses the relations between art and society, and, above all, the importance of art for social solidarity and moral progress. There is hardly any

<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of Beauty*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53–270.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Guyau: *Les Problèmes de l'Esthétique Contemporaine*, p. 77; *l'Art au point de vue Sociologique*, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Les Problèmes*, etc., pp. 15–86.

aesthetic response to art or nature that does not involve sympathetic emotion; and this produces anthropomorphism, the animation of the inanimate and the humanization of the living.<sup>1</sup> Passing from the spectator to the creative artist, we find the essential feature of the artistic genius to be an abnormal capacity for sympathy.<sup>2</sup>

We shall conclude our study of aesthetic hedonism by an account of two representatives of the great English psychological school in the second half of the last century, Grant Allen and James Sully.

The method of Allen's *Physiological Aesthetics* is to propound a physiological theory of pleasure and pain, and then to distinguish a special class of agreeable feeling, namely the pleasure that we call aesthetic.

Just as pain is produced by the inadequate nutrition or actual disruption of the nervous tissue, so is pleasure the concomitant of the healthy action of any or all of the organs or members supplied with afferent cerebro-spinal nerves, to an extent not exceeding the ordinary powers of reparation possessed by the nervous system. It follows that the amount of pleasure is probably in the direct ratio to the number of nerve fibres involved, and in the inverse ratio to the natural frequency of excitation; this explains why our acutest pleasures are derived from eating, drinking, and the activity of the sexual organs.<sup>3</sup>

And now we reach the most significant differentia of aesthetic pleasure; it is not distinctly traceable to any life-serving function. The beautiful is that which affords our nervous system a maximum of stimulation with a minimum of waste "in processes not directly connected with vital functions".<sup>4</sup> Hence the disinterestedness and freedom from monopoly so often claimed for our enjoyment of beauty.

<sup>1</sup> *l'Art au point de vue Sociologique*, pp. 8-21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-30.

<sup>3</sup> Grant Allen: *Physiological Aesthetics*, pp. 5-29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 30-57.

The superiority of sight and hearing, as purveyors of pleasure, to the lower senses, is due to no little extent to the greater number and variety of the sensory fibres involved; and besides, to their extremely rapid recuperation after stimulation, the optic fibres and terminal organs being repaired seventeen times per second, those of the auditory nerves as often as thirty-three times in the same period.<sup>1</sup>

According to the eminent psychologist James Sully, aesthetics is "a branch of study variously defined as the philosophy or science of the beautiful, of taste, or of the fine arts".<sup>2</sup> Like logic and ethics, it is a normative science, being concerned with determining the nature of a species of the desirable; at the same time, it is not a practical science, in the sense of providing rules for the definite guidance of the artist or the lover of beauty.<sup>3</sup>

Beauty, as Hume affirmed, exists only in the mind and we should do well to dispense with the assumption of an objective quality bearing this title; whatever beauty may be, it is certainly not the physical quality of an object in the same sense as its colour or its form.<sup>4</sup>

It is the function of psychology to investigate aesthetic contemplation and the creative imagination of the artist. First, let us examine the attitude of contemplation. The love of truth, the feeling of the beautiful, and the sentiment of duty are, owing to the predominance of thought and imagination in these states of mind, "sentiments", rather than crude, instinctive, emotions. The particular sentiment with which we are concerned, the "aesthetic sentiment", resides in "that pleasurable feeling which accompanies the perception of the beautiful in all its modes or forms of manifestation".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Physiological Aesthetics*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> James Sully: Article on Aesthetics in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th edition.   <sup>3</sup> Ibid.   <sup>4</sup> Ibid.   <sup>5</sup> *The Human Mind*, Vol. II, p. 133.



The most striking and characteristic feature of aesthetic enjoyment is its "contemplative" character, whereby it is sharply distinguished from those commoner modes of perception in which personal and practical interests predominate. Minor features of this peculiar variety of agreeable feeling are its "richness" and "purity", its "expansiveness" or "susceptibility of prolongation", and lastly its "shareability", an eminently social virtue which it owes to the fact that one and the same objective stimulus can affect any number of individuals.<sup>1</sup> Following Fechner, the author distinguishes two separate factors in the production of aesthetic enjoyment, one "direct", the other "indirect" or "associative"; the former comprises both a "sensuous" and a "formal" element, the latter arises from specific modes of grouping the various sensuous elements.

Now let us turn to the creative imagination of the artist. The "productive imagination" in general is distinct, though in degree only, from the reproductive imagination or ordinary memory, on account of its thoroughgoing modification, transformation, and recombination, of the mental images acquired in previous experience. Its activity becomes apparent in three main forms; as the "intellective imagination", determined by the disinterested desire for pure knowledge, as "practical construction", determined by the natural interests which direct practical conduct, and lastly, as "aesthetic construction", which is determined by the feelings and emotions that sway the mind of the creative artist.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Human Mind*, Vol. II, pp. 133-155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 362-387.

## CHAPTER III

### THE THEORY OF PLAY

KANT, in his *Critique of the Aesthetic Judgement*, tells us that a "free play" of the imagination, the faculty of assembling the manifold of intuition, and the understanding, which is the faculty of uniting representations by means of a concept, a process essential to any and every act of cognition, precedes and causes the feeling of aesthetic pleasure and lends universality to the judgment of taste.<sup>1</sup>

Schiller, in one of his *Letters upon the Aesthetical Education of Man*, develops the view that the artistic impulse is a variety of the "Spieltrieb". This impulse represents a synthesis of the "instinct for form", the legislation of reason for the will in moral volition and for the judgment in cognition, and the "sensuous instinct" which embraces the various impulses and desires of man's lower nature. Art is thus a reconciliation between the sensuous and the spiritual sphere, which are utterly divorced in duty, in speculation, and in the pursuit of pleasure; it is therefore very different from play in the ordinary sense.<sup>2</sup>

For Spencer aesthetic activity is in essence a kind of play, because "the activities that we call play are united with the aesthetic activities by the trait that neither subserve, in any direct way, the processes conducive to life".<sup>3</sup> Thus art affords recreation for the higher powers of man, an outlet for their superfluous energy, while sport provides a channel for the lower. The separableness from life-serving function is one of the indispensable conditions for the acquirement of aesthetic character.

<sup>1</sup> Kant: *Critique of Judgement*, pp. 63-67.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller: *Letters upon the Aesthetical Education of Man*, Letter 15.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Spencer: *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 627.

The sentiment of beauty consists of pleasure derived from sensation, perception, or representation, always on the condition of complete severance from the biological functions of the human organism.<sup>1</sup>

In various ephemeral publications this philosopher has let fall some interesting observations on grace, literary style, and the objective conditions of aesthetic experience. Excellence of literary style consists in the manipulation of words so as to effect the greatest possible economy in the attention of the reader.<sup>2</sup> And "contrast", such as the juxtaposition of light and shade or bright and dull colours in painting, or the alternation of forte and piano passages in music, is one of the essential prerequisites to all beauty.<sup>3</sup>

According to K. Lange, art is the acquired capacity of man to provide others with a pleasure, free from any practical interest, and derived from a deliberate and conscious self-deception, "Eine bewusste Selbsttäuschung",<sup>4</sup> the very kernel of artistic enjoyment, which is radically opposed to the ordinary, involuntary, psychological illusion. But play, also, as K. Groos has already demonstrated, is a conscious and voluntary self-deceptive activity, by means of which man provides himself and others with a disinterested pleasure; so that art is in fact a variety of play, peculiar only inasmuch as it is confined to the two higher senses; indeed, play should be regarded as the art of children just as art itself is the recreation of mature individuals.<sup>5</sup>

There is so striking a resemblance, K. Groos maintains, between the aesthetic experience and ordinary play, that it becomes absolutely essential for the aesthetician to

<sup>1</sup> *The Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, pp. 627-648.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 333-369.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 370-374.

<sup>4</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. VII, p. 178; *Die bewusste Selbsttäuschung als Kern des künstlerischen Genusses; Das Wesen der Kunst*, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-193; *Das Wesen der Kunst*, pp. 611-630.

analyse the latter activity. The play of youth is not, as Spencer had believed, a mere release of surplus energy divorced from biological ends, for it depends on the fact that certain important instincts, specially useful in preserving the species, appear before the animal actually needs them; it is a preparation and practice, "Vortübung und Einübung", for their serious exercise in later life.<sup>1</sup> This applies as well to the human child as to the young animal; he, too, thanks to the play activity, is afforded an admirable opportunity, through the exercise of inborn dispositions, to strengthen and increase his intelligence in the acquisition of adaptations to his highly complicated environment.<sup>2</sup>

Now art and play are both ends in themselves, whereas work is only a means to ulterior ends; they both satisfy the primary instincts and impulses of man—in the case of art, the mimetic impulse—through other than serious channels; they both involve an element of pure illusion, the animation of the external world, whether it be nature, art, or a stuffed doll; in fact, there is so profound an inner relationship between play and aesthetic enjoyment that the latter is fundamentally no more and no less than a kind of play.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K. Groos: *The Play of Animals*, Preface, p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> *The Play of Man*, Introduction, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Der ästhetische Genuss*, pp. 13-24.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THEORIES OF APPEARANCE AND ILLUSION

THOUGH von Hartmann belongs to the old, deductive, metaphysical school, he has contributed more, by the acuteness of his psychological analysis and the range of his acquaintance with art, than any of the other metaphysical aestheticians to the advancement of aesthetics as an exact science.

His definition of beauty as "the appearance of the Idea", "das Scheinen der Idee",<sup>1</sup> is partly metaphysical and partly realistic, but we shall concern ourselves here exclusively with the realistic concept of "appearance". Can beauty, he asks, be an attribute of reality, of things themselves? Now material reality consisting of atoms and molecules in motion, and light, colour, and sound, being the purely subjective qualities of sensation to which the former correspond, beauty, which is dependent on combinations of these secondary qualities, cannot reside in the real physical objects of the external world. But mental reality is equally inaccessible to art, it is represented only indirectly, by means of those causes, concomitants, and effects, which can themselves be directly perceived.

Hence it is that beauty is only to be found in perceptual appearance, be it real or imaginative, in subjective appearance as a mental phenomenon and neither in the real movements of the air or ether nor in any other actual things. Not that reality is simply indifferent to our aesthetic experience; on the contrary, it provides a necessary and indispensable condition; for the cause of

<sup>1</sup> E. von Hartmann: *Philosophie des Schönen*, Vol. II, p. 463.

the beauty of the image resides exclusively in the structure of the real thing, so that it is the duty of the professional artist to produce objects which, though not in themselves beautiful, can become the cause of lovely perceptual images in a normally organized human being. Real art is as indispensable for beauty as real sugar for sweetness, though the beauty is no more in the work of art than the sweetness in the sugar.

This preoccupation with appearances sharply distinguishes the aesthetic attitude from both the theoretical and the practical attitudes, which, though in different ways, are both concerned with real things and not with their mere appearance in consciousness. Aesthetic appearance in general manifests itself both in perceptual and imaginative appearance, the former, again, appealing either to the eye or to the ear.

It is very different from our customary intellectual perception of things, for it contains imaginative feelings, *Scheingefühle*, which are, however, entirely distinct from the normal reactive or even sympathetic emotions to which they correspond. The principal difference is one of intensity, the latter class of feelings being experienced more vividly than the former; from this it follows that the aesthetic emotions are less enduring than real emotions, and that they can be removed more rapidly; hence, also, they can be suppressed more easily by other emotions, and so allow a more rapid transition from one affective nuance to another. And further, these imaginative feelings are attributed, not to the mind that really experiences them, but to the object it perceives, into which, by a curious psychological mechanism, they are spontaneously projected.

The effect and result on the spectator of this appearance saturated in imaginative emotion is a feeling of real and vivid pleasure, such as accompanies every variety of

aesthetic experience, even the most tragic. This resultant enjoyment is also projected involuntarily into the object, so that, for the moment at least, subject and object seem absolutely identical. This is the only feature of real illusion in the sphere of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Schiller, in his last two letters on aesthetical education, develops the view that the artist is only concerned with the exterior and surface of objects, with their mere appearance, "Schein", as contrasted with the philistine or the savant, both of whom aim primarily at acquaintance with their substantial reality; "extreme intelligence and extreme stupidity", he tells us, "have a certain affinity in only seeking the real and being quite insensible to mere appearance".<sup>2</sup>

Konrad Lange, as professor of modern and mediaeval art history at Tübingen, was naturally concerned in his aesthetic writings with the fundamental nature of art, and not with aesthetics in the ordinary sense as a theory of the beautiful, which would have involved him inevitably in the consideration of nature as well as art.

What is it that distinguishes art from the other superior manifestations of the human spirit, from science, ethics, and religion? Science aims at the discovery of truth, it operates by means of concepts, and it deals with the causal connection of things; the dual series of representations—good and evil—in the moral consciousness are only instruments for the achievement of ethical purpose; and the essence of religion lies in unswerving faith in God and immortality, a faith which can no longer exist when its object is regarded—as it is in art—as no more than a fiction of the human imagination.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. von Hartmann: *Philosophie des Schönen*, Vol. II, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller: *Works: Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical*, p. 107; *Letters upon the Aesthetical Education of Man*, Nos. 26 and 27.

<sup>3</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. VII, pp. 177-193.

Now in what precisely does the deliberate and conscious self-deception, "die bewusste Selbsttäuschung", which is the essence of all artistic enjoyment, consist? It is constituted by a conflict between our artistic sensibility and our critical sense, an oscillation, "Pendelbewegung", between two opposed series of representations, between those elements which create and sustain the illusion and those which destroy it. We have, on the one hand, representations of the actual properties of the artistic objects which confront us, such as the character of the medium—pigments, words, musical tones—which the artist has cast in the mould of his conception, the frame and the flat surface of the picture, the entire absence of real movement in painting and sculpture.

And besides, on the other hand, we firmly believe that the medium so cunningly fashioned is the flesh of a person or the stuff of a thing,—“the illusion of the material”—that a flat surface or a faint relief has the depth of the world around us,—“the illusion of space”—that stationary figures in painting and sculpture are really in rapid motion,—“the illusion of movement”—and, above all, thanks to the “illusion of feeling”, that the inanimate creations of the artist breathe the breath of real life and palpitate with human emotions.<sup>1</sup> The conscious self-deception of our artistic consciousness is thus a perpetual oscillation between the two groups of representations, a lending of ourselves to the illusion only to rend it in a moment by our sense of reality, and this unique psychological process furnishes the pleasure proper to the realm of art.

<sup>1</sup> *Das Wesen der Kunst*, pp. 56–246.



## CHAPTER V

### THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

IN order to grasp the fundamental principles of the psychoanalytic aesthetic, developed in recent years by Freud and his many disciples, it is essential to sketch, quite briefly, the main outlines of the Freudian psychology.

It will be remembered how, starting from the notion of a perpetual "conflict", from childhood onwards, between the two opposing armies of primitive sexual and more human egoistic impulses, we are led to that of "repression", or the sinking of the vanquished erotic desires, entirely natural to infancy but repulsive to the civilized adult, into the unconscious depths of the mind; and further, how the act of repression creates in the unconscious a system of ideas and impulsions, isolated from the rest of the personality, and known technically as a "complex".

These sexual complexes are present to a greater or lesser degree in all civilized men and women, and they proclaim their existence in a large variety of ways; they appear in forgetfulness, in the *lapsus calami* and the *lapsus linguae*, in reverie by day and dreams by night, in every form of artistic activity, and, of course, in the pathological symptoms of complete neurosis. The artist, saved only by his art from the clutches of mental disease, is thus situated half-way between the normal individual and the neurotic.

Baudouin distinguishes two different classes of complex, innate and acquired, "les complexes primitifs" and "les complexes personnels", the former, seated in the primitive unconscious, being inherited and common to the entire human race, the latter, seated in the subconscious, being determined by the peculiar environment of each indivi-

dual and therefore varying according to circumstances. The outstanding examples of the innate or primitive complex are the Oedipus, mutilation, and Narcissus complexes.

This psychological conception is applied exhaustively both to art and to aesthetic contemplation.<sup>1</sup> Art is essentially the imaginative and concrete fulfilment of these perverse and violently repressed sexual desires; "L'Art se trouve donc être, pour le contemplateur comme pour le créateur, une réalisation imaginaire de désirs, et de désirs inconscients."<sup>2</sup> Enjoyment of the work of art is the fruit of the gratification of the spectator's sexual complexes, the acquired and personal type being roused by indirect and subjective associations, the primitive type by associations directly connected with the subject represented; there is thus real communication only between the unconscious of the artist and that of the spectator, their subconscious region being wholly peculiar to themselves.

In brief; the conclusion of the whole matter is that the artist projects his complexes into the work of art, while the contemplative observer projects his into the thing he contemplates. Therefore the work of art represents the result of the unconscious activity of its creator, while contemplation releases in its turn a similar subconscious activity in the listener, the reader, or the spectator.<sup>3</sup> The psychoanalytic hypothesis of Baudouin is profusely illustrated by examples culled from the fine arts, and an entire volume is dedicated to a psychological analysis of the poetry of Verhaeren.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Otto Rank has approached the domain of art from a very similar standpoint. For him the concept of artist connotes the type of the imaginatively creative being, "Der Typus des ideel schöpferischen

<sup>1</sup> See Baudouin: *Psychanalyse de l'Art*, pp. 21-135, 139-186.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 200.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 209.    <sup>4</sup> *Psychoanalysis and Aesthetics*.

Menschen", the founder of religion and the philosopher as well as the artist in the ordinary sense, as opposed to the practically creative type, to the hero.<sup>1</sup> The cultural development of the great historical peoples has moved from pan-sexuality to anti-sexuality, to the highest degree of sexual renunciation; between these two poles the whole cultural activity of the human race has hitherto revolved. Now art—which includes philosophy and religion—is the very highest expression of this activity.<sup>2</sup>

From the psychological point of view, the artist stands between the dreamer and the neurotic, the psychic process in all three cases being in essence the same. The highest varieties of the artistic human being—the dramatist, the philosopher, and the founder of religion—are located nearest the neurotic, the lowest forms nearest the dreamer.<sup>3</sup> But what distinguishes the artist profoundly from both is that he is able, thanks to a special treatment, a "sublimation", of the manifestations of his private instincts and personal conflicts, to mould them into a shape in which they become available for the enjoyment of others.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of the work of art in the climax of culture—like the possibility of the dream in neurosis—is to be sought in a regression of the Libido, of the sexual impulses, brought about by the total failure of either internal or external means of satisfaction. The occasion of such a disturbance is to be found as a rule in early sexual experiences, generally in connection with parents, brothers and sisters, or playmates. This central notion is applied at great length in an interpretation of poetry—although he deals with almost nothing but drama—of legend, and of the lurid and monstrous mythology of primitive peoples.<sup>5</sup>

The fundamental characteristic of the poet is to be

<sup>1</sup> Otto Rank: *Der Künstler*, p. 7.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 63.

<sup>5</sup> *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Saga.*

found in his capacity, owing to the peculiar development of his instinctive life, for expressing certain universally human conflicts in a socially recognized form; in this way the similar repressed impulses of the majority of men obtain satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> The avatars of the most outstanding sexual complex, the "Oedipus complex", in its three major forms of the incestuous lust of the son for the mother, of the daughter for the father, and—though this is probably derived from a parental complex—of brothers and sisters for one another, are traced with perverse ingenuity through the characters and conflicts of drama, ancient and modern, and of mythology. The effect of the work of art on the observer is very similar to its effect on the creator, only the order is reversed; it offers the unproductive individual the possibility, without any appreciable effort on his part, of ridding himself of superfluous excitation.<sup>2</sup>

Freud himself, in three separate volumes—*Leonardo da Vinci, Delusion and Dream*, and *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*—has laid the foundations of a psychoanalytic aesthetic, not to mention the celebrated description of art and of the artist towards the close of the "Introductory Lectures". "There is, in fact, a path from fantasy back again to reality, and that is—art. The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become a neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctive needs which are too clamorous. . . . So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his Libido, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of fantasy. . . . A true artist knows how to elaborate his day-dreams so that they lose that personal note which grates upon strange ears and become enjoyable to others; he knows too how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited

<sup>1</sup> *Das Inzest-Motiv in Dichtung und Saga*, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

sources is not easily detected. . . . When he can do all this, he opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of their own unconscious sources of pleasure, and so reaps their gratitude and admiration . . .”<sup>1</sup>

The study of the illustrious Florentine is an attempt to explain his whole productive activity, scientific and artistic alike, by means of an Oedipus complex created by a deserted mother in the mind of her love-child; the author himself evinces scepticism in regard to his conclusions, declaring that “if after accomplishing these things I should provoke criticism from even friends and adepts of psychoanalysis, that I have only written a psychological romance, I should answer that I certainly did not overestimate the reliability of these results”.<sup>2</sup> Freud has given us, besides, an interesting interpretation of a novel by Wilhelm Jensen, *Gradiva*. It is the story of a young man whose life, according to the Viennese psychologist, has been entirely warped by the stifling of a deep childhood affection for a little playmate, and who cures himself instinctively by the familiar method of bringing to the light of consciousness the original cause of the whole disturbance.<sup>3</sup> This explanation is certainly more plausible than that offered on behalf of Leonardo; indeed, it may be regarded as one of the definite successes of the psychoanalytic method.

The pleasure of wit, that elevated variety of the comic, is derived either from the mechanism and technique or from the tendencies—obscene, cynical, or sceptical—of the witticism. Now these are both produced by an economy of psychic expenditure, whether it be an economy in the expenditure of inhibited or repressed desires or an economy in mental activity analogous to condensation

<sup>1</sup> S. Freud: *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> *Leonardo da Vinci*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> *Delusion and Dream*.

and displacement in dreams. Wit is thus "the contribution to the comic from the sphere of the unconscious",<sup>1</sup> or, equally, "an economy of expenditure in inhibitions";<sup>2</sup> it is distinguished from the comic, that thrift in the matter of thinking, above all by the intervention of the unconscious with its ravening horde of repressed desires. The positive achievement of this study is rather to throw new light on certain varieties of wit, those, namely, in which aggressiveness and lascivious desire are handled with sufficient delicacy to raise them to the level of the comic, than actually to elucidate the whole nature of this phenomenon; for how often does the spark of mirth issue from a clash of conflicting ideas that conceal no practical tendencies whatever!

<sup>1</sup> *Wit and the Unconscious*, p. 336.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE EXPERIMENTAL THEORY

FECHNER, who has the honour of being the founder of modern scientific aesthetic, treated the newly discovered science of the beautiful as a particular branch of general psychology, or, to be still more exact, as a special department of hedonics, the doctrine of pleasure and pain.

The methodological revolution he inaugurated consisted in the introduction of the empirical method, one which was to work from below, "von Unten", proceeding from the particular to the general, in place of the old method of the metaphysicians, the philosophical method from above, "von Oben", according to which the investigator descended from the most general concepts to concrete and particular instances. In his opinion, however, the two methods are not mutually exclusive, though they should be applied in a certain order; a philosophical aesthetic can be constructed after and over an empirical aesthetic, just as a philosophy of nature can be erected on physiology and physics.<sup>1</sup>

His psychological investigations were performed by means of two distinct psychological methods, the method of experiment and control, of which he himself was the absolute originator, and the more usual method of observation and introspection.

The first experiments in the history of aesthetics aimed at the discovery of those simple forms which give delight, and they were of three different kinds; the method of choice, according to which selection in order of preference was made from a number of geometrical figures, the method of production, which encouraged the subjects to

<sup>1</sup> G. T. Fechner: *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, Pt. 1, pp. 1-7.

depict for themselves the figures they liked, and the method of usual objects, which consisted in measuring the proportions of things in everyday use, such as visiting-cards and note-paper. Among the conclusions reached were that the most displeasing figures are very long rectangles and the perfect square, with all rectangles which approach it closely; the most pleasing those rectangles constructed nearly or exactly in the proportions of the golden section. They were of special interest as showing that the golden section of Zeising, while a distinctly valuable discovery, was by no manner of means infallible.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of his two stout volumes he lays down thirteen psychological laws, some more significant than others, which together govern the affective life of man.<sup>2</sup> There is the principle of the "aesthetic threshold" which applies to consciousness in general, and which demands that a stimulus shall acquire a certain degree of intensity before it can become productive of either pleasure or pain. There is besides that of "aesthetic reinforcement", according to which several conditions of pleasure in combination produce a greater total satisfaction than that of any one condition in isolation or of the sum of their separate agreeable affects; such as, for instance, melody and harmony, or the co-operation of sense and rhythm in poetry. According to the principle of "uniform connection within a manifold", we prefer objects which exhibit both unity and complexity to stark uniformity or bewildering variety. The law of "absence of contradiction, agreement, or truth" states that we prefer harmony between our representations, and therefore truth, to mutual contradiction and error; while that of "clarity" expresses the satisfaction experienced when our representations are distinctly focussed in consciousness.

<sup>1</sup> G. T. Fechner: *Vorschule der Ästhetik*, Pt. 1, pp. 184-202.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Pt. 1, pp. 42-121; Pt. 2, pp. 230-263.



The law of "aesthetic association", in spite of its neglect in the past, is far more important than these, for, as every aesthetic impression can be resolved into a direct and an associated factor, it constitutes the half of aesthetics; according as that of which an event reminds us pleases or displeases, the recollection brings a moment of pleasure or displeasure to the aesthetic impression of the event, which either agrees or disagrees with other remembered moments and with the immediate impression. The principle of "aesthetic contrast" announces that when two events, differing in quality or quantity but not incommensurable, enter consciousness together or in immediate succession, the effect they produce is not equivalent to the sum of their separate effects, which is altered and strengthened by the final effect of the contrast. A corollary of the foregoing principle is to be found in the law of "aesthetic sequence"; when two impressions, *a*, *b*, differing only in the amount of pleasure or pain they produce, follow one another in a temporal sequence, a greater sum of pleasure is experienced in the positive direction—i.e. towards pleasure—than in the negative direction, i.e. towards pain. An immediate corollary flowing from this, and one of special importance to art, is the principle of "aesthetic reconciliation", which indicates that the total subsequent pleasure produced by two events succeeding one another in a positive direction is large enough to compensate entirely for the preceding moment of pain.

The next two laws refer to the duration of the stimulus. Any given stimulus must last an appreciable time before it can produce a pleasurable or painful effect; the effect once operative will increase gradually to a maximum, after which it will decrease to the point of indifference or even—but only in the case of pleasure—change to its opposite. And finally there is the all-important principle

of "minimum effort", which concerns the pleasure derived from the minimum expenditure of energy relative to the end in view rather than maximum economy *per se*.

The most interesting and exhaustive account of experimental methods is provided by Külpe in his report on the present position of experimental aesthetics.<sup>1</sup>

He divides the actual experimental methods employed by modern philosophers and psychologists in this sphere into three categories; two of these, that of impression, the "Eindrucksmethode", and that of expression, the "Ausdrucksmethode", are borrowed from Wundt's classification of experimental methods for the study of the feelings; the third had been invented by Fechner, the old method of production, of "Herstellung".

I. THE METHODS OF IMPRESSION are those based on the mental response of the subject to an aesthetic object which he is asked to judge or describe. They can be divided into three classes, according as the object in question is constant and unchanging, according as it is altered deliberately by the experimenter, and according as the subject is asked to describe rather than to judge.

(a) *Methods with a constant aesthetic object*

(1) The method of simple choice. This consists in asking the subject of the experiment to select the most pleasing of a number of objects presented to him. It was first employed by Fechner, and improved by him and F. Exner, for they found that by using a large number of subjects it was possible to find the object which provided most general satisfaction.

(2) The method of multiple choice. In this case the subject differentiates between a number of objects according to the different degrees of satisfaction they

<sup>1</sup> O. Külpe: *Der gegenwärtige Stand der experimentellen Ästhetik*.

produce, distinguishing the most pleasing, the fairly pleasing, and the definitely displeasing, or using even finer shades of approval or disapproval. This, according to Külpe, is an inadequate substitute for the method of simultaneous comparison, as the subject involuntarily compares each object or figure with its immediate predecessor.

(3) The method of series. A series of objects arranged according to some mathematical or physical principle is transformed by the subject into a series founded on aesthetic valuation. At first a rough valuation is given, and subsequently the finer shades of discrimination are added, the objects being arranged ultimately according to the latter estimate.

(4) The method of comparison by pairs, which was first invented by Witmer and J. Cohn. It consists in comparing successively each member of a series  $a, b, c, d$ , with every other,  $a$  with  $b$ ,  $a$  with  $c$ , and so on, being taken together until the number of possible combinations is entirely exhausted. Its defect is that it lends itself to spatial and temporal errors, inasmuch as the subject may easily be fatigued towards the close of the experiment, while the experimenter may arrange the pairs by accident so that the larger figure is always on one side.

*(b) Methods with a changing aesthetic object*

(1) The method of continuous change, invented by the American psychologist Martin. The aesthetic object is altered continuously and the reaction of the subject to every alteration is carefully registered. Thus, for instance, a judgment is demanded at different moments during a continuous variation of speed.

(2) The method of temporal variation, invented by Külpe himself and applied, amongst others, by Martin,

Dessoir, and E. von Ritook. Our aesthetic enjoyment is always a process which lasts a definite and appreciable time, so that, by removing the object at different intervals, it is possible to distinguish various phases of the process in question. This has shed considerable light on the problem of the direct and indirect factors in aesthetic experience. The former has been definitely proved to have an independent existence, for the subject responds to it almost immediately, and later only to the cognitive or sentimental content of the object.

*(c) Methods of simple description*

(1) The method of free description, first applied by Fechner, and used later by the Americans Gilman and Downey, and by Vernon Lee. The spectator is no longer confronted with a number of objects and asked to establish a comparison between them; he is expected to describe in detail his experience in face of a single object, a painting, for instance, or an item in a concert programme.

(2) The method of limited description. In this case the descriptive account demanded is strictly defined by the experimenter; someone versed in both art and psychology, for instance, draws up a questionnaire which is submitted to a number of individuals. Further, instead of considering the light shed by such a description on one individual or one object, the comparison of a number of such accounts has furnished information about whole classes. In America this comparative method has been adopted by Calkins and Puffer. The former, by presenting three pictures illustrative of colour, form, and expression respectively, to three hundred people of different ages, discovered that 88 per cent of the children preferred the highly coloured picture, 60 per cent of the adults the severer beauty of form.

resultant feeling, which an external stimulus awakens in the mind. We are thus at liberty to regard aesthetics as possessing two separate branches, a general and a special aesthetic; the former should include the scientific study of sensation, representation, feeling, and artistic creation, the latter the two wide fields of art—where the object is fashioned for an aesthetic purpose—and nature, where the object exists without serving any such purpose. Between them these two great branches encompass both the subjective and the objective aspect of our entire aesthetic experience.

The individual arts are divided by Ziehen into two large groups, the objective arts, “Objektive Künste”, and the verbal arts, “Verbale Künste”, according as they employ optical images, kinaesthetic or static sensations, and sounds, or words, alone or in combination with other primary elements; this principle of division applies equally, of course, to nature.<sup>1</sup>

The most important method of modern scientific aesthetics is essentially experimental, “eine experimentelle Methode”, and in this respect it differs from the usual and accepted empirical or inductive approach to the subject; aesthetics cannot be based on the personal aesthetic experience of a philosopher, or on that of a few artistic temperaments, for it should examine and compare systematically the experience of many different individuals. Now the methods of experimental psychology germane to our subject are two distinct varieties, “the experimental method in the pregnant and narrow sense”, and “the sub-experimental method”, the former using simple objects constructed specially for the purpose, the latter testing the onlookers by means of complex works of art or natural objects. The second is also the older of the two, and includes the descriptive methods of Külpe and

<sup>1</sup> T. Ziehen: *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, Pt. 1, pp. 63–102.

the third method of Fechner, the method of ordinary use. The true and more fruitful experimental test consists of the frequently applied method of choice, and the newly invented method of absolute predicates, "die Methode der absoluten Prädikate"; this involves the presentation of a single object—not of several, as in the ancient method of choice—to which the subject is asked to attach an absolute predicate. The predicates selected have been 5 in number: 1 = very pleasant, 2 = pleasant, 3 = indifferent, 4 = displeasing, 5 = very displeasing; but finer nuances of satisfaction or distaste, such as one and a half between one and two, may also be discriminated. Then by adding, for instance, the forty absolute predicates attached to each of twenty rectangles together, and dividing the sum by forty, one may calculate the mean absolute predicate for each.<sup>1</sup>

The specifically aesthetic feature of human experience is a feeling of pleasure, "Lustgefühl", produced in our minds by certain objects; and it can be clearly distinguished, in a number of ways, from the pleasure derived from the pleasant, the good, the beautiful, and the true. There is no sharp dividing line between aesthetic and sensuous pleasures, however different in many respects they may be, for aesthetic pleasure has gradually developed in the course of evolution from these more primitive varieties of satisfaction; the enjoyment of beauty is distinguished from that of goodness by reason of its immediacy, the latter presupposing knowledge of a criterion whereby the value of motives and actions may be correctly estimated; the useful object is always regarded as a mere means to further ends, the aesthetic object, on the other hand, is treated as an end in itself, quite out of relation to selfish and personal interests; the satisfaction derived from truth is, like that of goodness, always mediate

<sup>1</sup> T. Ziehen: *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, Pt. 1, pp. 103-135.

and indirect, for it presupposes knowledge of a standard whereby we may discriminate between truth and falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

While probing in detailed fashion such problems as the beginnings of art, aesthetic contemplation and enjoyment, and artistic creation, the most original contribution to be found in these narrower spheres lies in the enumeration of certain laws describing the general structure of the aesthetic object. Thus, for instance, the formal principle of complexibility, "Komplexibilität", indicates that it possesses certain points of definite resemblance and similarity which lend uniformity to the whole; while the principle of "Einfühlbarkeit" signifies that, thanks to some likeness to human gesture or utterance, the object enables us, after a spontaneous and unconscious act of association, to lend it life, personality, and passion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. Ziehen: *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, Pt. 1, pp. 1-35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Pt. 2, pp. 1-116.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THEORY OF EINFÜHLUNG

IF we care to trace the theory of *Einfühlung* to its sources in nineteenth-century philosophy, we should find the first germ of it in the eloquent polemic of Herder against the cold formalism of the Kantian aesthetic. This philosopher, who inaugurated the appreciation and study of the traditional poetry of the people, vindicates the romantic conception of beauty as the expression of life and personality in the objects of art and nature. Thus, for instance, in the vegetable kingdom, the beauty of flowers resides in a maximum of their own peculiar vitality and well-being, and the youth feels himself in the upward soaring tree. The beauty of man lies in the characteristic and energetic expression of his spirit in limbs, movements, and gesture; while sound is no other than the voice of bodies in motion, communicating to us, harmoniously attuned beings, their resistance, their sorrows, their active powers; whence music sheds its irresistible charm.<sup>1</sup>

In a justly celebrated passage of the *Microcosmus* Lotze declares that it is "not only into the peculiar vital feelings of that which in Nature is near to us that we enter—into the joyous flight of the singing bird or the graceful fleetness of the gazelle; we not only contract our mental feelers to the most minute creatures, to enter in reverie into the narrow round of existence of a mussel-fish and the monotonous bliss of its openings and shuttings, we not only expand into the slender proportions of the tree whose twigs are animated by the pleasure of graceful bending and waving; nay, even to the inanimate do we transfer these

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Herder: *Kalligone*, pp. 100-178.



interpretative feelings, transforming through them the dead weights and supports of buildings into so many limbs of a living body whose inner tensions pass over into ourselves".<sup>1</sup>

A somewhat unsuccessful explanation of this peculiarly vivid experience of beauty—what more recent philosophers have named *Einfühlung*—is to be found, not in the *Microcosmus* itself, but in those pages of the *History of German Aesthetic* where the author criticizes the very similar conception of Herder, who, for his part, had championed with all the warmth of a glowing imagination the free and complete expression of the inner life. The process is founded, he tells us, on a variety of the association or recollection of ideas. No one will deny altogether that the aesthetic effect of objects depends, not only on what they actually are, but of what they remind us by their appearance; every individual form acts upon us by bringing to mind the memory of movements, a recollection tinged by the pleasure or pain which, in the past, such bodily movements expressed; so that the people and things about us become suffused with feeling because they remind us, by their shapes and forms, of certain particular states of our own body accompanied by certain particular feelings in time past.<sup>2</sup>

Though the necessity for psychological accuracy obliged F. T. Vischer, in his later years, to make a drastic and courageous revision of his great work on aesthetics, he always remained at heart a metaphysician of the Hegelian school; beauty, for him, was still in essence the sensuous appearance, or the appearance in sensuous form, of the metaphysical Idea—"die sinnliche Erscheinung der Idee"—the unique spiritual substance of which the entire universe is fabricated.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Lotze: *Microcosmus*, Vol. I, pp. 585, 586.

<sup>2</sup> *Geschichte der Ästhetik in Deutschland*, pp. 70-86.

<sup>3</sup> F. T. Vischer: *Kritische Gänge*, Hft. 5, p. 133.

The subtle psychological investigation which directed the course of his latest studies culminated in the notion of "aesthetic symbolism", or the involuntary and unconscious treatment of art and nature as symbolic of human life and personality; "this humanization of every object can occur in the most various ways, differing according as the object belongs to the unconscious life of nature, to the realm of human beings, to inanimate or animate nature; into the former man projects himself, 'fühlt sich hinein', the artist or poet project us, 'fühlt uns hinein', by means of the intimate symbolism frequently mentioned. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

But what exactly is this process of "intimate symbolism", and how does it differ from the many other varieties of symbolism that we find in human experience? The symbolizing activity in general is the relating of an image and an ulterior significance by means of a point of comparison between the two; thus, for instance, a sword represents power and separation, an eagle bold endeavour, a lion generosity. Now there are three profoundly different branches of this symbolizing activity, the prime difference in each case residing in the psychological process by which the terms are related.

In the symbolism of mythology and popular religion this process is involuntary and unconscious, "unfrei und dunkel", happening without conscious or deliberate reflection and being accompanied by belief in the identity of the symbol and what it symbolizes; nature is really populated by hordes of gods and demi-gods, bread and wine, by the miracle of transubstantiation, are really flesh and blood. In the symbolism of allegory and ordinary life, on the other hand, the whole process is voluntary and clearly conscious, "frei und hell", the symbol being deliberately selected by reason of an observed affinity to

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Vischer: *Kritische Gänge*, Hft. 5, pp. 95, 96.

the idea it represents; this gives us the dove of peace, the scales of justice, the national flag of every country. Now the province of aesthetic symbolism lies, as a psychological phenomenon, somewhere between the two; it is an involuntary and yet, to a certain extent, deliberate, unconscious, and yet, to a certain extent, conscious, animation of art and nature, the act whereby we bestow on things our own soul and its moods, a peculiar and strictly aesthetic activity which has been christened *Einfühlung* by Volkelt and Robert Vischer. In this way the opposition, imagined by Köstlin to be ultimate, between the aesthetic doctrines of form and those of expression, is finally and harmoniously resolved; the shapes and forms of things, as well as their other qualities, are expressive and symbolic of human personality, so that pure formalism is a pure illusion.<sup>1</sup>

In a brief pamphlet on our perception of stationary and moving objects, Robert Vischer pursues further the psychological investigations of his eminent father, in order to combat more effectively the empty formalism of the Herbartian school.

The essential feature of our aesthetic contemplation of the world is a spontaneous projection, not of mere subjective sensations, but of real psychic feeling into the people and things which our eye perceives; in a word, it is not "*Einempfindung*" but "*Einfühlung*".<sup>2</sup> The act of projection follows perception immediately, and blends our personality with the object, so that it cannot possibly be described as a kind of association or recollection; in this way light and colour appear themselves to rejoice or to mourn. When *Einfühlung* is complete, our own

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Vischer: *Kritische Gänge*, Hft. 5, pp. 136-143; Hft. 6, pp. 4-9, "Das Symbol."

<sup>2</sup> This term was first used by R. Vischer in his essay *Über das optische Formgefühl*.

personality is perfectly identified with the object; but, of course, the fusion of the two is often partial and incomplete, and then we have "Nachfühlung" and "Zuführung".

The ultimate explanation of this purely aesthetic phenomenon, and, besides, of the process whereby we attribute our subjective sensations to external objects, is to be found in an innate pantheistic urge to reunion with the universe.

According to H. Siebeck, the most characteristic feature of aesthetic experience and of the aesthetic attitude in general is a peculiar variety of perception. For the perception of beauty is a kind of "apperception", the term being used in the Herbartian sense to connote the mingling, thanks to association and recollection, of the image or representation given immediately in perception with other representations derived from the past experience of the observer. What distinguishes "aesthetic apperception" profoundly from the normal apperception of everyday life, is that at such moments we regard the sensible object as itself expressive of human personality, "Persönlichkeit", and of human character, as they manifest themselves in perceptual experience; the object, on account of its external form, appears to us instinct with some mood analogous to that of a real person.<sup>1</sup>

It follows from this that the aesthetic attitude is active and productive, as compared with the passivity and receptivity of ordinary experience. The mental mechanism operative in the animation of the outside world is no other than the ordinary association of ideas. Whenever an inanimate sensible object possesses a peculiarity of external forms which reminds us of a similar peculiarity in the external form of the human person, the representation of the given object will reproduce the other

<sup>1</sup> H. Siebeck: *Das Wesen der Ästhetischen Anschauung*, pp. 57-85.





representation, which is the material sign of the psychic event with which it has originally been connected.<sup>1</sup>

It follows, besides, that beauty is not objective like the physical qualities of the things which confront us in experience; only the material conditions which lead to the creation of beauty by the act of imaginative perception are actually given. The material work of art, too,—the statue, the painting, the musical composition, the poem,—is in the strictest sense beautiful only for a spectator endowed with a fertile imagination.<sup>2</sup>

P. Stern is an historian as well as a theorist; he gives an interesting account of the precursors of *Einfühlung* in the romantic movement, such as Herder, Novalis, and Jean Paul Richter, and of the transition, during the second half of the nineteenth century, from metaphysical to exact aesthetic, as it appears in the later work of F. T. Vischer, in Lotze, Siebeck, Fechner, Groos, and Robert Vischer.<sup>3</sup> He is determined, besides, to vindicate the principle of association in face of an attack launched by Volkelt in the name of *Einfühlung*. The objections of Volkelt to the associative principle are threefold; it always involves a clearly conscious juxtaposition of associated representations, it cannot in itself be productive of feelings, and it indicates a purely accidental and casual connection between the associated terms. To this the writer cogently replies that association is by no means always a slow assembling of remembered events, but quite as often an immediate and unconscious relating of different representations, a process that issues in full consciousness as a feeling or mood; that the recollection of our past experiences often revives the emotions with which they were originally connected, and that the

<sup>1</sup> H. Siebeck: *Das Wesen der Ästhetischen Anschauung*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 211.

<sup>3</sup> P. Stern: *Einfühlung und Association in der neueren Ästhetik*, pp. 1-38.

principles of association are not arbitrary but necessary and inevitable, which explains why we never mistake an expression of kindness for one of malice or the marks of frailty for those of perfect health.<sup>1</sup>

But, in spite of the substitution of the principle of association for the mechanism of *Einfühlung*, Stern is at one with Lipps and Volkelt in placing a peculiar variety of sympathy, the positive echo roused in our personality by the spiritual life we perceive or create in alien bodies, at the very heart of the aesthetic experience; all delight in beauty is ultimately nothing but a joyous feeling of sympathy, "ein beglückendes Sympathiegefühl".<sup>2</sup>

In England the theory of *Einfühlung*, though it has hitherto never been voiced by a philosopher of real importance, is already foreshadowed in the work of certain poets and prose writers of the romantic school. Shelley, in his celebrated defence of poetry against the puritanical attack of Peacock, first defines the art of which he was so incomparable a master as "the expression of the imagination", and then urges that because it necessitates an extraordinarily wide and vivid power of imaginative sympathy it actually contributes to the growth of the moral personality.<sup>3</sup>

Much later, Oscar Wilde in that bitter cry of a soul tormented but purified through mortal anguish, a cry that rose straight from his cell in Reading gaol, tells us with profound truth that Christ "realized in the entire sphere of human relations that imaginative sympathy which in the sphere of Art is the sole secret of creation".<sup>4</sup>

Passing rapidly to more recent times, we find in the work of the essayist Vernon Lee a psychological study of

<sup>1</sup> P. Stern: *Einfühlung und Association in der neueren Ästhetik*, pp. 38-81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>3</sup> Shelley: *A Defence of Poetry*.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Wilde: *De Profundis*.



the attitude of appreciation and contemplation of beauty. Her views were much modified by contact with the thought of Groos and Lipps, who succeeded ultimately in converting her from a reduction of aesthetic appreciation to the real muscular and organic sensations which accompany and often reinforce it,<sup>1</sup> to her final hypothesis of aesthetic empathy.

This peculiar and specific psychological activity consists, we are told in a very recent publication, in the projection of real and remembered kinaesthetic sensations into the object of perception.<sup>2</sup>

We talk, for instance, of a mountain "rising"; we are then "transferring from ourselves to the looked-at shape of the mountain, not merely the thought of the rising which is really being done by us at that moment, but the idea of rising as such which had been accumulating in our mind long before we ever came into the presence of that particular mountain".<sup>3</sup> The same interpretation of "aesthetic empathy" appears in an article entitled "The Central Problem of Aesthetics", where it is treated as "the attribution of our own modes of dynamic experience, motor ideas, to shapes".<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, we are told quite distinctly in another article, bearing the significant title of "Aesthetic Empathy", that the process in question means that "we attribute to lines not only balance, direction, velocity, but also *thrust, resistance, strain, feeling, intention, and character*";<sup>5</sup> and further, in the conclusion to her collected essays and articles, we find that it is "the attribution of our vital modes, of our movement, conation, intention, will, and character to assemblages of lines and sounds that explains preference for certain forms rather than others; and this

<sup>1</sup> Vernon Lee: *Beauty and Ugliness*, pp. 156-239.

<sup>2</sup> *The Beautiful*, pp. 61-6 .

<sup>4</sup> *Beauty and Ugliness*, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

selection among visible and audible forms constitutes art".<sup>1</sup>

She has made, besides, a suggestive psychological analysis of the attitude of aesthetic appreciation. We experience "satisfaction", in the sense of willingness to prolong or to repeat the moment of delight; but this satisfaction is purely "contemplative" and so distinct from the enjoyment we derive from the good and the useful, which are valued in relation to our practical purposes and not on their own account. Further,—and this distinguishes the artistic from the scientific individual—what we enjoy in contemplation is not the analysis, or the explanation, or the history, of the thing before us, but only a certain "aspect" of it, namely, the side directly perceived.<sup>2</sup> In short, "the word beautiful implies the satisfaction derived from the contemplation not of things but of aspects".<sup>3</sup>

The poet Geoffrey Scott adumbrated a brilliant theory of architecture, which he applied, in contrast to Ruskin, to the neo-classical style in Europe, the style that flourished between the Renaissance and the Gothic revival, and in which he showed himself to be a disciple of the Einfühlung philosophers rather than the formalists.

The essence of architecture, as described in a passage from Wootton's *Elements of Architecture*, consists in the three fundamental qualities of "Commodity, Firmness, and Delight". The "Firmness" of a building lies in its conformity to the laws of mechanics; its "Commodity" is the

<sup>1</sup> *Beauty and Ugliness*, pp. 363–364. The words in italics are also in italics in the original text.

<sup>2</sup> *The Beautiful*, pp. 1–21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19. The term "empathy" was first coined by the psychologist Titchener as an English rendering for the German psychological term "Einfühlung". He gave it a general, and not a specifically aesthetic, connotation. Titchener: *Experimental Psychology of the Thought Processes*, p. 21.

practical and utilitarian, or social, purpose for which it is constructed; and, in so far as its structure expresses a disinterested desire for beauty, it also provides "Delight".<sup>1</sup> Confusion between these three distinct aims has been the prime source of error in architectural theory; those, like Ruskin, responsible for the romantic and ethical fallacies, have judged architecture exclusively by the religious, social, or moral values it embodies, while the mechanical fallacy has succeeded in reducing this great art to nothing more than structural efficiency.<sup>2</sup> The aesthetic significance that architecture possesses alongside of its practical utility resides essentially in the capacity for expressing "human moods and movements".

These "humanist values" traced by Lipps throughout the entire domain of aesthetic experience are realized in architecture by means of lines, solid masses, and empty spaces, and their co-ordination as elements within the whole to which they belong.<sup>3</sup> The substance of his views is contained in the following paragraph: "a spire, when well designed, appears to soar. . . . So, too, by the same excellent mechanism of speech, arches 'spring', vistas 'stretch', domes 'swell', Greek temples are 'calm', and the baroque façades 'restless'. The whole of architecture is, in fact, unconsciously invested by us with human movements and human moods. . . . This is the humanism of architecture".<sup>4</sup>

The contemporary philosopher L. A. Reid, in spite of a strong inclination to toy with the fashionable "expressionism" of Croce, and in spite of a summary rejection of *Einfühlung* that rests on so grotesque a misunderstanding of this theory that one is driven to suppose he has never studied its leading exponents in the original, ultimately defines beauty in the wide sense as

<sup>1</sup> G. Scott: *The Architecture of Humanism*, pp. 1-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-164.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-239.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.

"the character in an aesthetic object of satisfying, complete, self-sufficient expressiveness",<sup>1</sup> i.e. expressiveness of emotion and value, and so agrees in essentials with the conception of Lipps.

The originator of the *Einfühlung* doctrine in France was V. Basch, now professor of aesthetics at the Sorbonne and the most eminent living authority on our subject in that country.

The title of his *magnum opus* on the Kantian *Critique of Judgement* is definitely misleading; for it contains, besides a highly elaborate study of the entire Kantian philosophy,<sup>2</sup> a comprehensive history of aesthetics which is particularly thorough in its treatment of German thought in the nineteenth century, and an extremely interesting psychological solution of all the major problems of this discipline.<sup>3</sup> We shall concern ourselves exclusively in these pages with the last section of his work.

The ultimate nature of beauty is to be found, on a last analysis, not in thought or volition, but in feeling. One can distinguish clearly in aesthetic experience three separate types of feeling, the pleasure of sensation, intellectual or formal pleasure, and the pleasure derived from association. But these aesthetic sentiments differ in many ways from our other pleasures; they are due to the superior senses, hearing and sight, they are not directly related to our organic functions, they emanate only from the appearance or image of things, they are the immediate pleasures produced by this appearance, they are not subject to the degrading conditions which accompany the satisfaction of organic functions, they are, as a rule, less intense than most of our other emotions and therefore

<sup>1</sup> L. A. Reid: *A Study in Aesthetics*, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup> According to Croce, as thorough a study of the Kantian aesthetic as any in existence. Croce: *Aesthetic*, p. 483.

<sup>3</sup> Sautreaux: *La Revue Philosophique*, 1898.

excite a less marked action on the will, they can be removed more easily, they can co-exist in greater numbers and change more rapidly, and, lastly, they are sympathetic and social feelings.<sup>1</sup>

All these features, save only the production of aesthetic delight by the appearance of things as contrasted with their substantial reality, can be reduced to the last-mentioned, to sympathy; and this obstinate and recalcitrant characteristic serves precisely to distinguish aesthetic sympathy from the other forms of sympathetic emotion. "Le sentiment esthétique réside essentiellement dans l'acte de sympathiser avec les choses ou plutôt avec les apparences des choses."<sup>2</sup> This conception of aesthetic sympathy coincides exactly with F. T. Vischer's notion of aesthetic symbolism.<sup>3</sup> The aesthetic experience is therefore in essence an act of sympathetic symbolism, "symbolisme sympathique"; this fundamental feature of the contemplation of beauty cannot be reduced to ordinary association, as when one object reminds us of another, for in it the sensuous and the intellectual or recollected elements are completely and instantaneously fused.<sup>4</sup> The author reaffirms in his most recent publications unswerving loyalty to sympathetic symbolism and the delight it produces as the cardinal and predominating feature of the whole contemplative experience.<sup>5</sup>

It follows from this view that beauty cannot be objective, that the beautiful really exists solely in the contemplative mind at the actual moment when it vibrates sympathetically with the object;<sup>6</sup> the aesthetic character of an object is not a quality of that object, but rather an activity of our ego, an attitude we adopt in face of it, a particular way

<sup>1</sup> V. Basch: *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Vide supra, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, pp. 225-311.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd ed., Préface; *La Revue Philosophique*, 1921.

<sup>6</sup> *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, p. 551.

of envisaging it, of observing it, of hearing it, of interpreting it. Thus aesthetic contemplation is entirely subjective.<sup>1</sup>

Flying in the face of orthodox tradition in aesthetics, and combating the universality claimed by Kant for the aesthetic judgment, the author refuses to allow philosophers to establish norms which they prescribe to the artist or the artistic spectator; nothing is more certain than the evolutions and revolutions of taste, which oppose themselves flatly to a rule, a law, a universally valid canon of beauty.<sup>2</sup> This attitude, however, has undergone very considerable modification in recent years.<sup>3</sup>

While approaching these problems from a purely empirical and scientific standpoint, it is impossible to ignore the metaphysical implications which such investigations bear. The need that men feel for union with all forms of existence can only be explained by a monistic pantheism, by the original unity of consciousness and the unconscious, of exterior forms and the forms of our own intelligence, of extended space and thought, of matter and mind.<sup>4</sup>

Bergson has incorporated a similar view in his philosophical system. The aesthetic intuition, a faculty which exists in man alongside of normal perception, is a kind of sympathy, "une espèce de sympathie"; the artist, by means of this unique variety of sympathy, places himself within the interior of the object.<sup>5</sup> The aim of art, indeed, is to put to sleep the active powers of our personality, and so to bring us to a state of perfect docility in which we sympathize with the emotion expressed; while we sympathize with nature whenever she exhibits the faintest

<sup>1</sup> *La Revue Philosophique*, 1921.

<sup>2</sup> *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, pp. 385-400.

<sup>3</sup> *Études d'Esthétique Dramatique*. Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, pp. 293, 592.

<sup>5</sup> H. Bergson: *L'Évolution Créatrice*, p. 192.

sign of a human feeling or mood. Any emotion whatever can become aesthetic in this way; there is no specific feeling of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

The first of the great philosophers of *Einfühlung* in Germany was Karl Groos, who, like his contemporaries, was primarily a psychologist.

The kernel of all aesthetic enjoyment whatever is the activity or play of inner imitation, "*innere Nachahmung*", whereby we imitate internally the mental or material features of an external object; when the eye perceives with delight the contours of a figure, the transition from light to shade or the appearance of moving bodies, when the ear follows the magic of the movement of tones or transmits the content of poetic speech, there is in every case an inner mimicry of the external object.<sup>2</sup>

In a complete and intense enjoyment there are always motor processes of an imitative nature, which represent, as a rule, no more than an inner reproduction of the alien attitude, because, save in the case of very intense participation when the bodily movements become clearly visible to the eye, such muscular changes as actually occur are only incipient. For instance, our sympathetic vibration to an expression of anger first achieves the vividness of the most intense aesthetic experience when we have reproduced in ourselves the bodily manifestations of the emotion.<sup>3</sup>

Aesthetic enjoyment is therefore the product of a sympathetic sharing in the life and emotion of others, greatly facilitated by the kinaesthetic activity of inner imitation, by real or incipient movements of the legs, the arms, the whole trunk, or the voluntary muscles of the face. This standpoint is visibly modified in the author's later work.

<sup>1</sup> *Essai sur les Données Immédiates de la Conscience*, pp. 9-14.

<sup>2</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, pp. 82-99.

<sup>3</sup> *Der ästhetische Genuss*, pp. 179-211.

We are told there that the sympathetic vibration which rests on an inner imitation of the form of an object is neither an essential characteristic of all aesthetic experience nor the solitary source of aesthetic delight; quiet contemplation has its rights, as well as the ecstatic experience of sympathetic participation in foreign emotions.<sup>1</sup>

The play of inner imitation produces in the mind of the observer a peculiar illusion, "illusion", "Täuschung", shared by the activity of all our senses in ordinary perception, namely the projection of modifications of the self into the object; the aesthetic illusion is distinct from perceptual and normal psychological illusion only because it is active and voluntary, as contrasted with the passive and involuntary character of these.<sup>2</sup> The illusion peculiar to aesthetic experience is of three kinds; the "illusion of lending", which has been already mentioned, the "copy-original illusion", which consists in confounding the work of art with what it represents, and the "sympathetic illusion" whereby we identify the behaviour of others with our own, as when we actually become Faust.<sup>3</sup>

Aesthetics for T. Lipps, the most eminent representative of the theory of Einfühlung, is the science of beauty, of the aesthetically valuable, "die Wissenschaft des Schönen", "die Lehre des ästhetisch Wertvollen", beauty itself being the capacity of an object for producing in us a certain valuable or pleasant effect that we call the feeling of beauty. But this discipline is nevertheless by no means equivalent to the psychology of pleasure; for, though pleasure and pain in general are the signs of success or frustration of our inner activity, the immediate and apparent source of agreeable feeling may be, as in

<sup>1</sup> "Ästhetik", in *Die Philosophie im Beginn des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts*, pp. 513, 519.

<sup>2</sup> *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, pp. 96-97, 189-196.

<sup>3</sup> *Der ästhetische Genuss*, pp. 213-236.



the case of sensuous pleasure, external objects like food and drink, or, on the other hand, our own internal moods and volitional states, or finally—and then only is the feeling, strictly speaking, aesthetic—it may appear to be our own inner activity projected without and experienced in objects that exist independently of ourselves. As it is the first duty of aesthetic science to describe and explain the peculiar effect of the aesthetic object, a purely psychological event, as well as the conditions that it must fulfil if the effect in question is to be produced, aesthetics is essentially a psychological discipline.<sup>1</sup>

But the task of this science is not merely to understand, to describe, and to explain, its essential and primary function, but also to determine how an object should be valued aesthetically, and to prescribe what the artist should do in a particular case; it is a normative as well as a descriptive discipline. For granted that we know the nature and conditions of aesthetic valuation, and those precise conditions of which the combined effect rouses the joyous feeling of beauty, we must know inevitably besides how an object should be rightly valued and how the artist should act in order to achieve his ultimate purpose of creating a thing of beauty. Aesthetics stands in the same relation to art as any other pure theory to its corresponding technique, like theoretical physics to physical technique or physiology to the practice of medicine.<sup>2</sup>

Lipps steers clear of the pure subjectivism of those who stress exclusively the subjective and psychological aspect of the aesthetic experience, by asserting that the judgment of aesthetic value is absolutely dependent on the object. For it does not express an arbitrary, personal, opinion, but rather the peculiar right and demand—

<sup>1</sup> T. Lipps: *Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 1-6; *Kultur der Gegenwart*, pp. 349, 350; *Ästhetik*, Vol II, pp. 15-20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4; *Kultur der Gegenwart*, p. 349.

“Forderung”—for ever attached to the beautiful object; it is the valuation exacted by the object and alone suited to it.<sup>1</sup>

In examining those qualities of objects which condition and occasion aesthetic delight, we are confronted both by their material form and by their spiritual content; the former is really the symbol of the latter, it renders the object expressive of life and soul, and this first confers on it genuine aesthetic value.<sup>2</sup> Now what exactly does it signify, and how exactly does it operate, this “Einfühlung”, this perception of a spiritual life in animate or inanimate things? It consists, on a closer analysis, of two essential factors; on the one hand, there is a feeling such as pride, melancholy, or longing, in our own minds, our inner auto-activity, and on the other, a projection of this feeling into an object which expresses our spiritual life and in which it unmistakably lies.<sup>3</sup> We constantly transfer to the object of perception our experience of activity, striving, and power, be it happy and successful or frustrated and sad.

But first we should distinguish between *Einfühlung* and the many other experiences with which it may so easily be confused, and also demarcate the variety of *Einfühlung* which occurs in aesthetic experience from that which arises in ordinary contact with our fellow-men. It is not merely the artist who animates and humanizes the world in which he lives, for the child, too, and the savage, people their surroundings with the inhabitants of their own fantasy; but whereas mythology and animism deliberately invent imaginary beings, the artist only humanizes his environment to the length of sheer psychological necessity.<sup>4</sup> Again, it would be entirely erroneous to suppose that all *Einfühlung* is aesthetic; the sympathy that moves

<sup>1</sup> T. Lipps: *Ästhetik*, Vol. I, p. 368.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Kultur der Gegenwart*, pp. 357, 358.

us at the sight of a gesture of sorrow or a smile of joy, and, in some degree, whenever we perceive a fellow-creature, "die praktische Einfühlung", is accompanied by concern for the objective reality of the emotion we believe someone to be feeling, whereas "ästhetische Einfühlung" or "ästhetische Sympathie" is not only indifferent to the question of truth and falsehood, but, further, can only be felt in aesthetic contemplation, when we are completely released from the practical interests and momentary moods of ordinary life.<sup>1</sup>

This specifically aesthetic sympathy, the full and unalloyed experience of our own emotion and striving in the objects that surround us, is the common essence of all aesthetic enjoyment whatever.<sup>2</sup> Delight in spatial forms, we read in the pages of the *Raumästhetik*, like aesthetic delight in general, is at bottom a joyous feeling of sympathy, "beglückendes Sympathiegefühl".<sup>3</sup> Again, we are told distinctly that aesthetic sympathy, "ästhetische Sympathie", is the fundamental condition of all aesthetic enjoyment whatever; it is this alone that brands mere enjoyment as truly aesthetic.<sup>4</sup> In yet another work, on the categories of the humorous and the comic, we find again that all aesthetic enjoyment is founded ultimately and solely on sympathy.<sup>5</sup>

Having described the nature of Einfühlung in general, and of the special variety that becomes operative in aesthetic experience, it is natural that we should endeavour to explain the psychological mechanism by means of which it becomes effective. Can it be reduced to the great principle of association, to a recollection of the emotion and striving we have already experienced in

<sup>1</sup> *Kultur der Gegenwart*, p. 362; *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 32-36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>3</sup> *Raumästhetik*, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Von der Form der ästhetischen Apperception*, p. 369.

<sup>5</sup> *Komik und Humor*, p. 224.

conjunction with certain shapes and sounds? Or does the immediate fusion of the shape or sound we perceive with the inner life it expresses bear witness to an innate and ultimate faculty of the human soul, existing independently of our past experience and prior even to experience itself?

Lipps, while never guilty of confusing *Einfühlung* and ordinary recollection, can hardly be acquitted of inconsistency in regard to the relation between this phenomenon and association in general; in an early work we are told that *Einfühlung*, though an original psychological event, "certainly takes place by means of association",<sup>1</sup> whereas the maturer opinion of his *magnum opus* is definitely hostile to the empirical principle of association as a plausible explanation for the *Einfühlung* process. It should be observed, he says, that in gestures, movements, sounds in nature, or human speech, there lies, "liegt", an inner life, which is directly expressed, "zum Ausdruck kommt", and that the inner life and the material object pursued are not simply associated together, but constitute rather an indivisible unity; the connection, for instance, between a gesture of sadness and the emotion of sorrow it expresses is entirely original and unique, and cannot possibly be explained by recourse to analogical reasoning or association with our own past experience.<sup>2</sup> The child responds immediately to the friendly smile of the mother, before it can conceivably have inferred from its own facial movements or from the constant conjunction between beneficent actions and this particular facial expression that a smile betokens kindly feeling.<sup>3</sup> So however important a part association may actually play in the act of *Einfühlung*, the conclusion must inevitably be that this process is ultimately inde-

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, 1900, p. 437.

<sup>2</sup> *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 22-28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 112-114.

pendent and rooted deeply in the innate structure of the human mind.

One outstanding merit of the work of Lipps lies in the extraordinary minuteness and detail with which he traces *Einfühlung* among the forms of art and nature, a far more arduous and complex task than the analysis and definition of the psychological phenomenon itself. He first distinguishes four main types of this activity. There is general apperceptive *Einfühlung*, "*allegemeine apperzeptive Einfühlung*", by means of which we animate the form and outline of the common objects we perceive, turning an ordinary line, for instance, into a movement, a stretching and expanding, a bending, or a smooth gliding; then by empirical *Einfühlung* or *Einfühlung* in nature, "*empirische oder Natureinfühlung*", we transform and humanize the objects that surround us in the realm of nature, the animals, the plants, the inanimate things, so that we seem to hear the groaning of the trees, the howling of the storm, the whisper of the leaves, the murmur of the stream, and to see the drooping flowers, or the clouds and the brooks that hurry on their way; then by the projection of moods, "*Stimmungseinfühlung*", colours acquire a character and personality of their own and music the whole of its expressive power; and lastly, our tendency to regard the material appearance of our fellow-men as symptomatic of their inner life, "*Einfühlung in die sinnliche Erscheinung lebender Wesen*", lends to the human voice, gestures, and features—to the eye, above all, and then to the mouth—their overwhelming significance for the artist and the artistic spectator.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from these, the broadest and least differentiated types of *Einfühlung*, Lipps has applied his master principle with an extraordinary wealth of detail and abundance of illustration to individual forms in art and nature,

<sup>1</sup> *Kultur der Gegenwart*, pp. 355-360; *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, p. 22.

to rhythm in poetry and music, to colours, tones, and words, and to the more outstanding aesthetic categories. The mechanical forces that reside in the columns and spaces of a great temple or cathedral first acquire aesthetic significance when they become the symbols of human impulse, striving, and conative effort; in the line, the geometrical pattern, the simple architectural forms which constitute the primary elements of any great building, we strive boldly upwards or press firmly downwards, we dilate and expand or limit and narrowly contract ourselves.<sup>1</sup> But the bulk of the aesthetic of space is devoted to an explanation of common optical illusions by the unconscious animation of spatial forms, accompanied by the analysis of 175 different examples, illustrated in each case by the line or figure under discussion.<sup>2</sup>

Passing now to colours, we find that they embody every shade and nuance of human emotion, that the brilliant, highly saturated tint has the strength of our own energetic and determined volition, that yellow is full of joy, dark blue of deep seriousness, and violet of longing. In a melodic pattern we become aware of the real and profound nature of music; for it is not merely a succession of musical tones intimately related to the tonic note from which it starts, but in essence the very voice of calm and passion, of peace and longing, of rejoicing and tears, of arduous struggle and ultimate reconciliation. The bare sound of words in poetry or ordinary speech, the mere combination of vowels and consonants, quite apart from the meaning they are intended to convey, has intense emotional significance, and the poet exploits these combinations and enriches them by such old devices as rhyme, assonance, and alliteration.<sup>3</sup>

We should not forget, however, that the aesthetic value

<sup>1</sup> *Kultur der Gegenwart*, Vol. I, pp. 224-292; *Raumästhetik*, pp. 3-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Raumästhetik*, pp. 61-419.

<sup>3</sup> *Ästhetik*, Vol. I, 425-505.

of the object is attached to its form as well as to its content, to its structure and outline as well as to the inner and spiritual life it symbolizes and which we confer on it by the animating act of *Einfühlung*.

The three great laws which govern the formal qualities of all aesthetic objects are those of uniformity, "*Gesetz der Einheitlichkeit*", of unity within variety, "*Gesetz der Einheit in der Mannigfaltigkeit*" and of monarchic subordination, "*Prinzip der monarchischen Unterordnung*". The first of these expresses a similarity or resemblance manifested by the separate parts of a figure that unfolds itself in space or time, such, for instance, as a circle, a square, or a regular hexagon, or any melodic or rhythmic phrase. A melody, for instance, is a succession of musical tones mathematically related to the tonic from which they begin and to which they ultimately return, while metre and rhythm represent a regular sequence and a recurrence of similar elements, one foot in poetry being followed immediately by another in the same metre and one bar in music succeeding another in the same time. This principle also explains the delight afforded us by apparently simple sensations, such as isolated or combined colours and tones; besides, consonant and dissonant harmonies in music please or displease in accordance with this law. If the note C be taken to represent the rhythmic and regular sequence of 100 vibrations per second, then 200 similar vibrations would produce the octave, 150 the fifth, and 125 the third, above it; the common factor in these elementary consonant harmonies is obviously 100, 50, and 25 rhythmic vibrations per second. The major seventh above C, on the other hand, stands to it in the relation of 8 to 15, so that in this case it is evident that no common factor can be found and we have a dissonant harmony or discord.

The next law is exemplified by those objects that

possess a common structural form or rhythm developed, elaborated, and differentiated, within their separate parts; the object then presents to the spectator both unity and difference, the different parts being the differentiation of a common ingredient and not disconnected units. This may be observed in the straight line, which consists of parts separated in space, but moving in a common direction. The last law of the three, that of monarchic subordination, indicates that the unifying feature within a manifold is not the common factor or element that penetrates its every part, but rather a single, isolated, section that dominates and overshadows the whole. Such, for instance, is the spire of the Gothic cathedral or the highest peak that boldly uplifts itself from a mountain range.<sup>1</sup>

According to Volkelt, who accepts *Einfühlung* as the central feature of the experience of beauty without restricting himself, like Lipps, to it alone, the primary and fundamental task of aesthetics is to understand, to describe, and to explain, first and foremost, the aesthetic attitude, "das ästhetische Verhalten", aesthetic contemplation and receptivity in general, which includes the entire realm of nature as well as that of art, and then, secondly, the actual creation of works of art, "das künstlerische Schaffen", by individual artists.<sup>2</sup> But what method or methods should prove most fruitful when adopted for the solution of these great problems?

As both artistic appreciation and artistic creation are activities of the mind, different varieties of human attitude in face of things, the essential and primary method of aesthetics is always and inevitably psychological, this discipline is, in part at least, a psychological science.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ästhetik*, pp. 18-90.

<sup>2</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 82, 83; *Ästhetische Zeitfragen*, Lecture 6.

<sup>3</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 3-12.



But the particular psychological method that is of real service to the aesthetician is introspective—the analysis of his own experience of beauty and of similar experience described to him by others—rather than experimental; for the enjoyment of simple colours, tones, or geometrical forms that symbolize no inner life is really “pre-aesthetic”,<sup>1</sup> and, for a number of reasons,<sup>2</sup> this elementary and philistine stage of artistic appreciation is alone accessible to the methods of experimental psychology.

But every experience of beauty in art or nature has two different aspects, subjective and objective, a mind that responds and reacts to some external stimulus and an object that provokes and causes the peculiar subjective response. Hence, objective aesthetic, “Objektive Ästhetik”, or art science, “Kunstwissenschaft”, is the natural complement and fulfilment of subjective aesthetic, “subjective Ästhetik”; though, as the essential features of the whole experience always transpire in the subject, the function of the former is strictly subordinate, it works in the service of the latter. The psychological method thus leads us inevitably from the subject to the object, from the purely subjective reaction, “reaktive Gefühle”, of individual minds towards the aesthetic impression, to the act of *Einfühlung* itself, to the projection and objectification of our emotions, impulsions, and moods—“gegenständliche Gefühle”—and their attribution to external objects, and thence still to the material conditions which this experience invariably involves, the specific arrangement of lines, colours, tones, or words on which it entirely depends, the specific structure of art and nature that corresponds to the various aesthetic categories and to the objective aspect of the four great aesthetic norms.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide infra*, p. 166.

<sup>3</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 13–23; *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 1–25; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. 12.

Now aesthetics is not merely concerned, like the natural sciences, with brute facts, "Tatsachen", it deals besides with values, "Werte", and every value, whether it summons us from the sphere of religion, morality, beauty, or truth, demands immediate realization by the effort and action of human beings; hence it is that this philosophical discipline is only in part a chapter of psychology, a description and explanation of certain peculiar psychological processes, and belongs besides to the general theory of value, "allegemeine Wertphilosophie", which always prescribes the laws or norms by means of which a given value may be realized in actuality, "Wertverwicklungsgesetze"; so, having analysed and described aesthetic experience in all its richness and variety, the aesthetician is at length able to formulate those very general norms according to which beauty may be produced and judged and ugliness avoided or condemned.<sup>1</sup>

But the vast territory of aesthetics cannot be completely explored by means of the psychological and normative methods alone; to these, certain others must be added, of which the first in order of application is the genetic method. We are confronted by the problem of change, development, and evolution both in regard to the individual and to large and small groups of human beings; it is necessary for us to trace the aesthetic growth of the child as well as to observe the first stirrings and the ulterior development of aesthetic experience in the souls of primitive peoples.<sup>2</sup>

The recognition of beauty as a great human value issues finally in a metaphysic of aesthetics, in the application of the metaphysical method; for aesthetic value is, like science, religion, and morality, a value that we pursue for its own sake, "eine Selbstwert", as contrasted with

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 24-33; 291-297.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-68.

the utility value that things acquire as the mere instruments and means of achieving these supreme ends. And every "Selbstwert" is necessarily and inevitably, in its very essence, absolute and unconditioned. At the same time, it is wiser to conclude than to begin our entire investigation by the metaphysical method; starting from those generalizations and laws demonstrated by ordinary experience, the aesthetician may hope ultimately to attain a more or less problematic prospect of the kingdom of the unconditioned.<sup>1</sup>

Having considered the main purpose and the principal methods of scientific aesthetics, we can now examine and evaluate its actual achievements, starting from the fruits of the psychological method. A psychological analysis, description, and explanation of aesthetic experience is, in fact, equivalent to the psychology of aesthetic *Einfühlung*; for, though this phenomenon cannot, as Lipps believed, exhaust this type of experience in its entirety, it certainly represents a supremely significant and characteristic aspect of the creation and contemplation of beauty.

What are the special and unique characteristics of *Einfühlung*? Its peculiar nature is manifest, in the first place, in the sudden appearance of objective feelings, "gegenständliche Gefühle", of emotions that we attach to external and material objects instead of to our own persons. When we immerse ourselves in the sculpted figure of Niobe or David, their expression immediately conveys to us the sorrow or defiance that they seem to experience; we do not feel these emotions to be our own, but rather to be theirs, we never attribute them, as we do our ordinary moods, to our conscious personality and separate self. But not only are the emotions that appear in *Einfühlung* objective rather than subjective, a modi-

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 25, 26; *Ästhetische Zeitfragen*, Lecture 6.

fication of the object and not of the self, they are besides so intimately fused with the gesture or movement perceived by us that we regard them as actually seen with, "mit-gesehen", the bodily change through which they are revealed; we do not, for instance, first observe the gesture of defiance and then represent to ourselves the emotion it is designed to express, we see defiance emerging from the gesture itself. We have now observed, like Lipps, both the intimate fusion between percept and emotion in the act of Einfühlung, and the complete detachment of the aesthetic emotion from the self, its experience as part and parcel of the external object that confronts us.<sup>1</sup>

Now at this point an extremely important distinction must be drawn, the distinction between aesthetic Einfühlung and that more common variety which accompanies inevitably the perception of our fellow-men. It is quite impossible for us to see or hear another human being without treating his voice and physical appearance as expressive of psychic processes and events; but, whereas the sympathy of ordinary life is weakened and obstructed by our personal interests and preoccupations, or by the abstract knowledge we have acquired in our past experience, aesthetic sympathy or aesthetic Einfühlung is intense, perfect, and complete.<sup>2</sup>

The complete and profound sympathy of aesthetic Einfühlung itself ramifies in two principal directions; in the case of the human figure as it really exists or as we find it portrayed in art we sympathize with the literal significance of the object, we experience simple Einfühlung, "einfache Einfühlung", whereas, on the other hand, the object as a rule acquires a symbolic significance by analogy with something else it resembles, and then we

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 145-150; *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 48-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155, 156.

have symbolical *Einfühlung*, “symbolische *Einfühlung*”. As this variety applies to the whole realm of nature,—with the exception, of course, of our fellow-men—wherever, in fact, we animate the inanimate and humanize the sub-human, as well as to the greater part of art, it is clearly the vaster and more important ramification of the two.<sup>1</sup>

So far we have contented ourselves with a summary description of the experience of *Einfühlung*; let us now attempt to trace its causal explanation in the mind where it really occurs. Volkelt, alike in his early volume on aesthetic symbolism, in his *magnum opus*, and in his latest work on the aesthetic consciousness, has steadfastly maintained, with Meumann and the mature Lipps, that *Einfühlung* cannot be regarded as a variety of association and should be treated rather as a distinct and original psychic activity. The connection between the object perceived and the emotion it expresses is too immediate for a linking of the two events by association, it is an “*Einschmelzung*”, a spontaneous infusion of the percept with an emotional content by means of an unconscious psychic process.<sup>2</sup>

But if *Einfühlung* is not dependent for its efficacy on associations, and may sometimes even, as when we at once interpret a look, a gesture, or a melody, to signify weariness, dignity, or joy, operate without any intermediary between the percept and the emotion it awakens, it often and as a rule requires mediation of some kind or other. When we watch a company of dancers at a theatre, or the gestures and contortions of an angry man, we tend to imitate the movements perceived with our own bodies, without reproducing completely their physical

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 202-208.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 179-181; *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 91-95; *Der Symbol-Begriff in der neuesten Ästhetik*, pp. 73-84.

state we feel tension or contraction in our own muscles and limbs, and in this case motor sensations are the intermediaries that facilitate the act of *Einfühlung*; besides, we often refer what we perceive to knowledge gained in previous experience, a gesture of despair may rouse by analogy another such gesture observed in the past, which, in its turn, revives in our minds the emotion it originally served to express. Such are the different paths we follow in animating and humanizing the world around us.<sup>1</sup>

We have already observed that aesthetics is concerned with a great human value, equal in rank to moral, religious, or scientific value, and how, when the aesthetician has concluded a psychological description and explanation of the aesthetic consciousness, he should turn immediately to the task of formulating those norms or laws that enunciate the necessary conditions, psychological and objective, for the realization of the beautiful. Now, inasmuch as the experience of beauty transpires in the self, while, at the same time, the external object that produces it has to satisfy certain definite requirements, every aesthetic norm will have two-aspects, subjective and objective, the former prescribing the proper state of mind of the spectator, the latter the right structure of the artistic or natural object.

These norms are four in number, and they cannot be reduced to perfect unity; for, just as epistemology is ultimately confronted by the dualism of subject and object, and psychology by a number of simple and qualitatively different functions of consciousness, so in aesthetics we are faced inevitably by the four separate and independent psychological sources of the experience of beauty.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 186–201; *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 98–110.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. I.

The first norm lays down for the subject a contemplative attitude saturated by feeling, such as has already been analysed and described in the course of the psychological handling of *Einfühlung*; for the object it prescribes a unity of form and content that debars the portrayal of a spiritual subject which fails to achieve adequate expression by means of its material form, as well as the creation of bare material forms utterly devoid of spiritual content. The second norm is formal. It indicates abnormal intensity of the relating activity of the subject, manifest in the grouping, organization, and reduction to unity of the several distinct parts of a work of art or natural thing; while the object must present itself as a complete organic whole, exhibiting the intimate relationship of the parts to one another and to the whole to which they mutually belong.

The third aesthetic norm demands of the subject an attenuation of his feeling for reality, a temporary banishment of the egotistical impulses that dominate his everyday life and a momentary exile even of his earnest striving in the sphere of speculative, moral, and religious values, an attitude that suddenly transforms the external world, the entire realms of art and nature, into a world of pure perceptual appearance.

The fourth and last norm insists that the object should reveal through its content a definite human value, religious, moral, scientific, or artistic, and not something merely petty, trivial, insignificant, or quite exceptional; and it summons the spectator to expand his consciousness from the particular to the general, from those things that are indifferent or opposed to the ideals of human life, to the purely human, to the wide domain of cultural values.<sup>1</sup>

Volkelt has never, however deeply immersed in the

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 291-532.

maze of artistic and psychological detail contained in volume one of his system, during the richly illustrated discussion of the aesthetic categories that occupies the whole of his second volume, during the patient analysis of art and artistic creation in the first half of volume three, lost sight for good of the central and dominating philosophical interest in aesthetics—the metaphysical implications of the experience of beauty.

His speculation in this sphere shows a remarkable change in development as we pass from youth to age, a long pilgrimage from the monistic shrine of nineteenth-century idealism to that of a distinctly pluralistic theism. We read in the early essay on aesthetic symbolism, written to vindicate his original metaphysical credo, that the pantheistic impulse to symbolism is inconceivable outside a world organized on pantheistic lines; in aesthetic symbolism mind becomes by direct experience one with nature, and recognizes an ultimate and underlying identity.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the last volume of his vast system a very different picture of ultimate reality is revealed. By an immediate inner conviction, "intuitive Gewissheit", we know for certain that the supreme ideals and values of the human race,—beauty, truth, goodness, and holiness,—are not relative to the peculiar and ephemeral structure of the human mind, but are, on the contrary, absolute, unconditioned, and everlasting. It follows inevitably that these values—"Selbstwerte", "Eigenwerte",—are grounded in the purposive determination, "Zweckbestimmtheit", of human nature; while an absolute purposive determination of individual beings is incomprehensible without an absolute purpose of which their private ends are a direct expression, and this implies in turn a teleological as opposed to a purely mechanical universe.

<sup>1</sup> *Der Symbol-Begriff in der neuesten Ästhetik*, pp. 109-120.



Existence therefore appears in its entirety as the self-realization of the one, absolute, value, "die Selbstverwirklichung des absoluten Wertes", and an absolute value of this kind is inconceivable without an absolute consciousness of which it is the immediate object; when we are asked in what consists the intimate and profound nature of this absolute value, we can only answer that it must resemble the essence of the four, separate, human values that reflect it in the realm of space and time, and that this essence is love.<sup>1</sup> Now if our universe is in truth the field for the self-realization of infinite love, then the tragic, which represents the war waged by reason and goodness against irrationality and evil, cannot be, *sub specie aeternitatis*, a picture of ultimate reality, but only exists as a moment of transition to the final victory of the holy and the good.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. III, pp. 465-567.

<sup>2</sup> *Ästhetik des Tragischen*, pp. 509-526.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY

Now what exactly is the phenomenological aesthetic, this product of the most recent and original school in German philosophical thought? In what respect is it a departure from the psychological, scientific, and metaphysical schools of the past? Its novelty appears to be above all methodological.

In the first place, it concerns itself exclusively with the description of phenomena, "Phänomene", with objects as they appear in perception, and not at all with their causal explanation; with the tones of a symphony, for instance, and not with the physical vibrations which produce the sound we are actually hearing. Further, it regards such objects not in their casual, accidental, and purely individual detail, but only in so far as they conform to general laws; it grasps the essential and intimate nature, "das Wesen", of the object. And lastly—the fundamental feature of the whole method—it proceeds neither by deduction, like the old aesthetic from above, nor by induction, like the more recent aesthetic from below, but by a peculiar intuition, "Wesensintuition", which seizes the general nature of every object in a particular example. The intimate and fundamental feature of the thing so revealed resembles the Platonic Idea, and it can only be detected by those rare individuals who have enjoyed a special training and special gifts. An immediate and inevitable corollary is that the phenomenological aesthetic is a variety of the objective aesthetic championed by Dessoir and Utitz, for it clearly directs its analysis towards the external object, the work of art, not towards the subject, which has always been the

central preoccupation of the psychological aesthetician.<sup>1</sup>

Artistic values, as they appear universally in works of art, are of three distinct kinds: the formal values stressed exclusively by the formalist school, the imitative values which are the foundation of the theory of imitation, and those positive values derived from a vital or spiritual content and emphasized, to the exclusion of all others, by the aesthetic of content.

Formal values are attested by the presence in every art of either symmetry, or harmony, or rhythm, or equilibrium, or proportion, or unity within a manifold. Imitative values are, of course, peculiar to the imitative or representative arts, and they consist either of the exact copying of the object as it exists in nature or—what is far more significant—of the reproduction of its fundamental nature, “Wesen”, thanks to the creative vision of the individual artist. But it is the vital or spiritual content of aesthetic objects that constitutes the very kernel of the world of beauty; the play of forces in architectural forms described so brilliantly by Lipps, the calm or excitement of different colours, the lament or longing in musical tones, the mirth or melancholy of a landscape.

Though artistic value has thus appeared in the plural rather than the singular, the specific quality of the object's effect on the spectator is quite unique, and this supplies the genuine and characteristic feature of the artistic attitude as such; it always involves qualitative, existential, contemplation, “eine existentielle qualitative Kontemplation”.<sup>2</sup> The existential or metaphysical significance which objects possess in artistic experience, as opposed

<sup>1</sup> M. Geiger: *Zugänge zur Ästhetik*, pp. 136–158; *Beiträge zur Phänomenologie des Ästhetischen Genusses*, pp. 567–573; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. 19, Hft. 1; W. Ziegenfuss: *Die phänomenologische Ästhetik*, pp. 27, 40, 54, 55. <sup>2</sup> *Zugänge*, p. 134.

to practical life, is common to the four other domains of value, religious, philosophical, moral, and scientific; but, what profoundly distinguishes the artistic attitude from all these, is that it is at the same time contemplative and disinterested.<sup>1</sup>

What, we are entitled to ask when we descend to particular problems, are the criteria that demarcate aesthetic pleasure or enjoyment from every other variety of experienced delight?

In the first place, as Kant and Külpe have maintained, aesthetic enjoyment of art or nature is an essentially contemplative enjoyment, "Betrachtungsgenuss", which implies a certain distance between the self and the object it appreciates in contemplation. Thus, for instance, the pleasures of sport and play are derived immediately from our own activity and exertion, and should therefore be rigorously excluded from the sphere of the aesthetic. And further, we must enjoy a complete concrete object with all its sensuous qualities, "die Fülle des Gegenstands", if our contemplative delight is to be truly aesthetic; this excludes naturally the satisfaction we may derive from any one aspect—political, religious, moral—of the object in isolation from its fellows.

And lastly, following Kant and Schopenhauer, our contemplative delight in the whole concrete object is perfectly disinterested, "eine uninteressierte Betrachtung"; not, of course, in the sense that our self is not deeply "interested" in the experience it undergoes, but because we have no personal and selfish interest in the object, because the practical self that wills and desires is utterly banished. This immediately excludes the useful, the agreeable, and the erotic, from the sphere of the beautiful. We are at length able to define aesthetic delight in general as enjoyment in the disinterested contemplation of an

<sup>1</sup> M. Geiger: *Zugänge zur Ästhetik*, pp. 67-135.

entire concrete object, "ein Geniessen in der uninteressirten Betrachtung der Fülle des Gegenstands".<sup>1</sup>

There is a considerable individual variation in the actual manner of projecting our emotional moods into objects, as when we see joy or sorrow in colours or in a landscape; some adopt a contemplative and entirely objective attitude, being conscious only of the emotion as a character of the object, others, more sentimental by nature, dwell on the mood as experienced in the mind of the subject, others still are aware at once of the emotion expressed in and by the object and of a similar emotion aroused by sympathy in themselves.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Beiträge zur Phenomenologie des ästhetischen Genusses*, pp. 665; 629-674.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeitschrift für ästhetische und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. VII.

## CHAPTER IX

### ECLECTICISM

BOSANQUET's most important contribution to aesthetics has been historical; in his extremely ambitious *History* he sketches the main development of this branch of philosophy from the Graeco-Roman era, through the Middle Ages, until the close of German metaphysical aesthetic in the latter half of the last century. But as this great work was also critical, he was able to develop in the course of it his personal point of view, which, in company with some interesting psychological analyses, he reiterated in his later writings on the subject.

His catholic eclecticism appears in the attempt to effect a reconciliation between ancient and modern thought by combining the principle of form, of paramount importance in the philosophy of art until the eighteenth century, with that of emotional expressiveness, which has come right to the fore since the Romantic revival. He formulates his conception of beauty, in the widest sense, in the following phrase: "among the ancients the fundamental theory of the beautiful was connected with the notions of rhythm, symmetry, harmony of parts; in short, with the general formula of unity and variety. Among the moderns we find more emphasis is laid on the idea of significance, expressiveness, the utterance of all that life contains; in general, that is to say, on the conception of the characteristic. If these two elements are reduced to a common denomination, there suggests itself as a comprehensive definition of the beautiful, 'that which has characteristic or individual expressiveness for sense-perception or imagination, subject to the conditions of general or abstract expressiveness in the same medium'."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> B. Bosanquet: *A History of Aesthetic*, pp. 4-5.

But there is a difference between the emotion of aesthetic experience and that of ordinary life; the former is not merely, like the latter, "discharged" into the void, it is "expressed" by embodiment in a concrete material form, the utterance of joy, grief, or anger, is qualified by the use of rhythmical, musical, or metrical forms.<sup>1</sup> Turning for our illustrations to art and nature, we find both formal and expressive features playing a part in our enjoyment of these phenomena; on the one hand we are confronted by simple and abstract forms, "the *a priori* embodiments of the aesthetic spirit", on the other by real or "represented" people and things, which, though they depend for their emotional expressiveness on our previous experience, are connected with it by something more intimate than ordinary association. The arts branch off naturally according to the particular medium employed by the artist.<sup>2</sup>

The *Three Lectures* contain besides an interesting psychological analysis of the attitude of aesthetic contemplation. It is characterized by the presence of a feeling of pleasure, which is distinct on three grounds from pleasure in general; being, as Marshall indicated, a "stable" feeling it endures more continuously than the pleasures of the lower senses, being a "relevant" feeling, it is attributed to a specific external object and not to the mind or body of the subject, and being a "common" feeling, it is not peculiar to each individual, but shared instead by all who possess real taste.

A second characteristic of the aesthetic attitude is its "contemplativeness", for there is no attempt to alter the object, as, in theory, for the acquisition of knowledge, or, in practice, for the attainment of some useful purpose; and finally, a third characteristic is that we always enjoy

<sup>1</sup> *Science and Philosophy and other Essays*, pp. 395-396.

<sup>2</sup> *Three Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 38-75.

the aesthetic object in actual or imagined perception, that we are concerned exclusively with the semblance or appearance of things, and that all else is wholly irrelevant.<sup>1</sup> In short, the aesthetic attitude consists in "the pleasant awareness of a feeling embodied in an appearance presented to imagination or imaginative perception".<sup>2</sup>

For Alexander, who has followed Bosanquet fairly closely, the three values of beauty, goodness, and truth, are "tertiary qualities" distinct both from such secondary qualities as colour, temperature, or taste, and from the primary qualities of size, number, and shape. The peculiar features of these "tertiary qualities" is that they always arise out of a relation between the subject and the object, being created by the mind in co-operation with material reality; so they evidently do not belong to the nature of objects, like the primary and secondary qualities, independently of the mind that perceives them.<sup>3</sup> Take, for instance, beauty.

Now it is impossible to suppose that nature really possesses a tertiary quality named "beauty" in the same way as she possesses her so-called secondary qualities; products of nature possess beauty only in so far as they are converted by the spectator into works of art. The illusion of art lies in the endowment of the material with qualities that really do not belong to it. A similar illusion occurs in the artistic appreciation of nature. He who finds a landscape beautiful makes it so by selection and composition, and, if need be, by imaginative addition. In this way, like the artist, he imputes his mind to nature.<sup>4</sup>

The expressiveness of works of art or natural objects, their animation with life or with distinctively human

<sup>1</sup> *Three Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 3-10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> S. Alexander: *Space, Time, and Deity*, Vol. II, pp. 236-246.

<sup>4</sup> *Art and Nature*.



qualities of feeling and character,—the pride of a statue, the varied emotions of music or of a lyrical poem—is due entirely to the mind of the artist or the spectator; the thing of beauty is illusory because it does not as an external reality contain the character it possesses for the aesthetic sense, and this is the real meaning of the “aesthetic semblance”. On the other hand, the congruence or coherence of its parts, the unity it displays in spite of its variety, is a real feature of its external form. The combination of these two factors, mental and material respectively, the coherence and fusion of real external elements with other elements supplied from the mind, is exactly what constitutes beauty.<sup>1</sup> A corollary may be found in the coherence among minds that appreciate; the mind for which an object is truly beautiful apprehends or appreciates impersonally and disinterestedly.<sup>2</sup>

The author's attitude to the creative activity is that the aesthetic impulse is an outgrowth from the instinct of constructiveness, being that impulse or instinct when it has become first human, and next, contemplative. The constructive instinct of the bird or the bee is, to a certain extent, blind, inasmuch as the purpose to be fulfilled is not clearly envisaged by the animal; in handicraft and technology this constructiveness remains practical, but is guided by purpose; in art it is emancipated from practical aims and pursued for its own sake.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Space, Time, and Deity*, Vol. II, p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 287–296.

<sup>3</sup> *Art and Instinct*.

## GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ART AND BEAUTY

## I. THEORY OF AESTHETICS

The work of E. Meumann is both systematic and historical, for it includes, besides a brief sketch which elucidates the more outstanding problems of aesthetics, and lays special emphasis on the psychology of artistic creation and enjoyment, an admirable historical introduction to the main currents of modern, empirical research on this subject in Europe and America.

He treats aesthetics as the scientific study of the aesthetic attitude of man to the world, "das ästhetische Verhalten des Menschens zur Welt", in all its manifold aspects, as distinguished by a number of definite traits from the theoretical, the practical, and the moral attitudes; it includes within its scope both conscious states of a particular and distinct order and specific material objects, so that neither the psychological nor the objective school can alone exhaust the entire subject. It extends in this way over four different fields; the problem of aesthetic enjoyment is purely psychological, that of artistic creation is both psychological and objective, that of art and the system of arts is purely objective, and so also is the problem of aesthetic culture, which involves the study of that immense domain in which beauty is subordinate to the practical needs of life in the deliberate embellishment of our immediate surroundings. Perhaps, after the empirical structure of the whole science is at last complete, it may be possible to crown the edifice by means of a philosophical aesthetic, a metaphysic of the beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Meumann: *System der Ästhetik*, pp. 9-30; *Einführung in die Ästhetik der Gegenwart*, pp. 25-32.

Aesthetics may either be conceived as a normative science, providing rules and precepts, or as a descriptive science, contenting itself with pure description and explanation. The representatives of a descriptive and explanatory aesthetic, among whom the author must be counted, maintain that if we know the conditions that actually govern artistic creation and the judgment of aesthetic value, precepts for the achievement of definite aesthetic purposes immediately follow, whereas the so-called norms of the nineteenth-century metaphysicians were quite arbitrary and without foundation in ordinary artistic experience. Only an empirical aesthetic can furnish rules, in the shape of causal laws, for the production and judgment of works of art, and in this manner end the conflict between the normative and the descriptive schools of thought.<sup>1</sup>

According to the biological hypothesis of R. Müller-Freienfels, value in general, as it appears throughout the living kingdom, is whatever contributes to the preservation or increase of the greatest sum of life on our planet; it is thus an exclusively biological phenomenon and always relative to the desires or instinctive needs of living organisms.<sup>2</sup> Turning now to human beings, we find that they value their activity and striving either for its own sake, as an end in itself, or as a mere means of achieving some desired end; we can thus divide human experience into an aesthetic sphere, "das Ästhetische", to which belong art, theoretical knowledge, religion, and play, and a practical sphere, "das Praktische", which will include all the normal pursuits of the practical man.<sup>3</sup>

For O. Külpe, as for the vast majority of aestheticians,

<sup>1</sup> *System der Ästhetik*, pp. 14-16; 116-126; *Einführung in die Ästhetik der Gegenwart*, pp. 28-32.

<sup>2</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. II, pp. 150-157.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 1-9.

aesthetics is a normative science. Our knowledge of both the subjective and the objective, the psychic and the material, conditions of the aesthetic attitude, naturally provides a definite standard for the judgment of the spectator and rules for artistic production, though account should always be taken of the historical development of the various conditions in question. It follows from this that aesthetic science is not merely descriptive, but normative or prescriptive as well. These aesthetic norms should be regarded, however, as hypothetical rather than categorical, having no application where the desire and thirst for beauty have not already become apparent.<sup>1</sup>

J. Cohn, another psychological aesthetician, regards aesthetics as one of the philosophical disciplines, a science of values, "Wertwissenschaft", which undertakes to examine the particular variety of values that rules in the spheres of art and beauty.<sup>2</sup> Its methods are empirical, for it starts, not from the general principles of any philosophical system, but from the actual data of our aesthetic experience.

According to the prominent Neo-Kantian, Hermann Cohen, philosophy if it is to exist at all must be systematic, must take the form of a completely rounded system. It is the unity of the cultural consciousness of man that lends unity to this system; for just as Logic follows the movements of mathematical thought in the natural sciences, and thus becomes a "Logic of Pure Knowledge", just as Ethics surveys the development of moral volition in individual conscience and juridical and political systems as presented by history, and thus becomes an "Ethic of Pure Will", so aesthetics, that the field of culture may be quite exhausted, examines the vast domain of art and of artistic delight in nature, and in this way provides the

<sup>1</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, p. 7.

third and last stage of the whole system of philosophy, an "Aesthetic of Pure Feeling".<sup>1</sup> This conception is evidently modelled on the three successive Critiques of Kant, and it is essentially hostile to the post-Kantian subordination of aesthetics to metaphysics and religion.

But, if the rational and philosophical discipline of aesthetics is to be possible at all, there must be universal "conformity to law", an independence of casual experience, among all aesthetic phenomena, which can be ultimately traced to certain innate concepts or propositions, such as the notions of time, space, substance, or causality in logic, or of freedom in ethics; and this fundamental concept of aesthetics is furnished by "pure feeling", "das reine Gefühl". Now "pure feeling" is not equivalent to ordinary "feeling", to any form of pleasure or pain, which are rather an accompaniment or "annex" of some definite content of consciousness than a real content in themselves. For it is rather and in essence pure, simple, and universal love, the only genuine love, perfect love of human nature—"Liebe zur Natur des Menschen"—as it appears in the unity of body and soul; such is the creative principle in the fine arts and such, too, the nature of their enjoyment, for the latter process is a variation or recapitulation of the original artistic experience. And we find it again in the feeling for nature, for this is simply love of human nature broadened and deepened into love of the human in nature.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. THEORY OF ART

An interesting essay by H. Delacroix, professor of psychology at the Sorbonne, contains a theory of art, developed simultaneously with a criticism of other theories,

<sup>1</sup> H. Cohen: *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls*, Bd. I, pp. 3-5, 16-19.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Bd. I., pp. 174-185, 186, 192, 213-217; Bd. II, pp. 416, 417.

and a number of detailed illustrations culled judiciously from the major arts.

The two essential and fundamental features of art, which together distinguish it from every other form of human experience, are fabrication or construction and harmony, "L'art est construction et il est harmonie"<sup>1</sup>; the whole labour of the creative artist aims at the fabrication of a co-ordinated whole, of a material thing by means of which an aspect or moment of human life is enclosed in a form, and this thing, the work of art, brings into being a world where the harmony of our spiritual life, of our faculties and psychic functions, is suddenly and mysteriously achieved.

Hence, it is no longer possible to identify art and play.

The latter activity, in its two great forms of adaptation and recreation, "le jeu préexercice et le jeu amusement", the preparation of children and young animals for the normal exercise of their instinctive functions—first studied by Groos—and the active or imaginative recreation of sport or day-dreams, shares with art the significant trait of being an expenditure of surplus energy, of energy not required for immediate practical purposes. But—and here the two activities begin to diverge significantly—the artist loves his material in and for itself, whereas to his the player is almost indifferent, the artist constructs an enduring work instead of the fugitive and ephemeral products of the player, and lastly, in the noble and elevated act of creation, he realizes the perfect harmony of his psychic faculties. It would thus appear that art is an altogether more complex activity than play, and one of the superior forms of our mental life.<sup>2</sup> Those who believe the artistic activity to be no more than an animation of the universe err by their exclusiveness, neglecting, for instance, the calm and detached "Zuschauer" of Müller-

<sup>1</sup> H. Delacroix: *Psychologie de l'Art*, p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-46.

Freienfels, while the champions of metaphysical or realistic idealism—a Hegel, a Schopenhauer, or a Taine—assumed falsely that the essence of the work of art exists before it is actually created.<sup>1</sup>

The three features that distinguish clearly the art from the play activity are repeated in a chapter of a monumental treatise on modern French psychology, which stresses, besides, the entire disinterestedness of the aesthetic attitude; man, liberated from practical aims, finds himself face to face with things as they really are, and not merely with those aspects of them which may prove of use to him.<sup>2</sup>

For Müller-Freienfels art in the strictest sense is that which aims primarily at producing aesthetic experience; this definition, while claiming that the essence of art is only to be found among the fine arts, neither excludes the applied arts from the scope of the concept nor confines aesthetic experience within the narrow limits of art. It is a pure fallacy to suppose that this phenomenon is no more than a subordinate species of the genus “play”, because it clearly involves a material form, “die Form”, that is fixation in an objective and material product, the work of art itself. It is distinct, besides, from theoretical knowledge and religion; the former treats experience as a mere means to conceptual thought, the latter views it in relation to a transcendant reality, while art alone expresses for its own sake our immediate awareness of nature and of our own minds.<sup>3</sup> Now the ultimate explanation of the satisfaction furnished by art and play lies in the biological principle of Avenarius, the principle of minimum effort, “des kleinsten Kraftmasses”; it is this perfect adjustment between the rate of dissimilation

<sup>1</sup> H. Delacroix: *Psychologie de l'Art*, pp. 47–81.

<sup>2</sup> *Traité de Psychologie*, Vol. II, pp. 297–332.

<sup>3</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 9–20.

and assimilation in the nerve cells that really accounts for the delight we derive from art, and also, of course, for the indifference and discomfort we experience in ordinary life; the glory of art is that it provides a maximum stimulation with a minimum expenditure of nervous energy.<sup>1</sup>

J. Cohn maintains that art is both construction, "Gestaltung", and expression, "Ausdruck".<sup>2</sup> Its two fundamental aspects, form and expression, are intimately mingled in actual experience, and can only be separated by means of cold analysis; then it is that we find the work of art to manifest an imagined inner life, and, at the same time, to possess the unity and coherence of a complete and independent whole. The plain fact that art is not one but many may be accounted for by the different materials employed by the artist in the process of fabrication.

Poetry, according to H. Cohen, realizes more perfectly than any other art the distinct and fundamental nature common to all the arts, for in speech, its peculiar medium, thought (Denkebegriffe) and the feelings attached to thought (Denkegefühle) are most happily combined. Music is akin to it, however, for, though it operates by means of musical tones instead of words, the notes of the scale correspond to letters, and melody and harmony to the propositional form taken by language. The speech, the manner of expression, peculiar to the plastic arts is a fashioning (Bilden) of some specific material; this, in the case of architecture, is space itself, in the case of painting and sculpture, which share with their sister art the problems of space and movement, of filling and delimiting empty space, it is rather a moral factor, human

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 21-26; Vol. II, pp. 13-30.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, p. 104.



personality, as represented in stone, bronze, or pigments. In this manner the author brings to light the underlying unity that allies the various arts to one another, as well as those prominent differences which are responsible for the existence, in reality, of a number of separate and distinct arts.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. THEORY OF ARTISTIC CREATION AND OF THE ARTISTIC PERSONALITY

G. Séailles, in an interesting and beautiful essay, attempts, by means of psychology, to probe the mystery of the artistic personality and creative activity, not of the ordinary professional artist, but of those rare and elevated beings in whom beauty has crystallized most perfectly, the geniuses of art.

The foundation of the creative imagination of genius, the stirring of a crowd of images under emotional stress and the tendency of these to translate themselves into appropriate movements, is a common trait of human personality at moments of passion; but in artistic creation there is, besides, a deliberate and voluntary organization of these images, and their embodiment in an appearance, the work of art, which they create and which reproduces them. The germ of the emotion, conception, and execution of the artist is to be found in the emotion, imagination, and action, of ordinary life<sup>2</sup>; the difference between the artistic genius and the normal being is therefore one of degree only, not of nature or quality.<sup>3</sup>

The most characteristic mark of the artistic personality is a special aptitude of some kind or other, the overwhelming prominence and predominance of one sense

<sup>1</sup> H. Cohen: *Ästhetik des reinen Gefühls* Bd. I, pp. 363-367, 400-401; Bd. II, pp. 194-196, 424-425.

<sup>2</sup> G. Séailles: *Essai sur le Génie dans l'Art*, pp. 1-226.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Intro., p. 8.

organ; the painter is primarily an eye, the musician an ear. Its possessor shows, besides, a kind of hyperaesthesia, he lives through and for his senses, he finds in all things acutest suffering or most exquisite delight.<sup>1</sup>

A more elaborate scrutiny of the creative imagination, whether artistic, religious, philosophical, scientific, or practical, has been made by T. Ribot, who dissolves it by analysis into three basic constituent elements, emotional, unconscious, and intellectual. Every variety of creative imagination necessarily presupposes an affective spring, a need, an appetite, a desire, an unsatisfied impulse, or an emotion of some kind or other; this conceals as its humble origin simple motor tendencies, the ultimate source of all imaginative activity. This finding harmonizes with the author's conative psychology; imagination in the intellectual sphere is equivalent to volition in the sphere of movement.

Besides the affective factor which we have already mentioned, there are two others of importance, the unconscious and the intellectual factors. The former, known in vulgar parlance as "inspiration", is marked by its suddenness, the abrupt eruption of ideas into consciousness, and also by its impersonality, appearing as it does to be produced by a power foreign to the individual though acting through him. It presupposes the existence of a subliminal or unconscious imagination which is only perfected by the machinery of conscious imagining. The latter, the intellectual feature of the creative process, includes the two consecutive processes of dissociation, a selection from imagery already in germ at the perceptual level, and association, in this case association by similarity, a mode of thought rightly regarded as the essence of imagination in the intellectual sphere; but it should never be forgotten that the cognitive activity is set in motion

<sup>1</sup> G. Séailles: *Essai sur le Génie dans l'Art*, pp. 154-160.

by the antecedent emotional mood or instinctive disposition.<sup>1</sup>

The supreme moment of man's experience of beauty is to be found, according to Meumann, not in the contemplation of art or nature, but in the activity of the creative artist. Now the motives of artistic production are not purely individual and psychological, but social and, in this sense, also impersonal; they are derived from the environment as well as from the unique personality of the artist, who bears inevitably the stamp of the culture, the taste, the fashions, the economic, political, and religious institutions of the times in which he lives, and even, sometimes, of the geographical and climatic conditions of his particular country. But besides and above the external influences which powerfully affect the artist, there are the psychological forces that work in his mind; these are of two distinct varieties, being either peculiar to each individual or common to all alike. The three successive phases in the creative history of the artist, are, first, the profound emotion of the initial artistic experience, then, the impulse and desire to express this experience in a definite artistic form, and lastly, the effort to lend this self-expression the character of a permanent work.<sup>2</sup>

The cause of the initial artistic experience may be supplied either by reality, such as a group of striking individuals, the fair face of nature, the bliss and tragedy of love and death, or by works of art themselves, as when a poet is suddenly inspired by another poem or a musical composition; there is thus no one cause or unique experience common to different artists or to the different arts. The connection between emotion and its expression by means of gesture and bodily movements is immediate and involuntary, an elementary psycho-physical pheno-

<sup>1</sup> T. Ribot: *Essai sur l'Imagination Créatrice*, pp. 1-53.

<sup>2</sup> E. Meumann: *System der Ästhetik*, p. 43.

menon; therefore the expression of feeling cannot in itself possess, despite Croce and his fellow expressionists, any artistic significance at all. The impulse of the artist to express his deepest emotions and to communicate these to his fellow-beings may be distinguished from the ordinary expression of emotion both by reason of its deliberate and voluntary character, and because it is not dissipated in an instant, but rather embodied for ever in a concrete work of art.

The paradox of the last and constructive moment in artistic creation lies in the antagonism between deliberate fabrication and the natural warmth of feeling, the tendency of technique to stifle emotion and of emotion to dispense with technique; but, nevertheless, construction furnishes the essential and characteristic feature of the creative process, for both the desire to express and communicate emotion, and the initial experience which produces it, extend far beyond the domain of art.

Müller-Freienfels insists, in spite of Meumann, that artistic creation differs in many respects from artistic enjoyment, and not least because it includes a considerable number of purely practical moments, themselves aesthetically indifferent. The essentially aesthetic feature cannot therefore lie in the activity itself, or even in the purpose for which the finished work is designed—it is often useful—but rather in the direction, “*Richtung*”, of the whole process, which is itself determined by the initial aim and conception of the artist. The moment of inspiration is marked by strong emotions and feelings and by a sudden and impersonal eruption of ideas; it presupposes a specialized and receptive memory, and issues in a creative imagination—as opposed to the mere reproductive memory—which relies on the unconscious for an abundant supply of images.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 181–232.

Four different artistic styles, "Wirkungsstil", "Schaffensstil", "Materialstil", "Gegenstandstil", contribute, to a greater or less degree, to the fabrication of any and every work of art; the first two have a psychological source, emanating from the personality of the artist, the last two an objective source, being determined by the material in which he works or by the subject which he is engaged in depicting. The first of these, which includes the invention of all structural forms, such as the repetition of a theme or melody in music, is also the most significant for art. The author then proceeds to lay bare the abstract and formal structure of music, poetry, painting, and the representative and unrepresentative plastic arts.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THEORY OF AESTHETIC APPRECIATION

A psychological theory of aesthetic contemplation, the theory of "Synaesthesia", has been recently advanced by some Cambridge psychologists. For them aesthetic enjoyment is essentially "a state of equilibrium", a psychological harmony in which our impulses are neither in conflict with one another nor repressed, as they are in ordinary life, the whole self being brought into vigorous and harmonious activity. From this it apparently follows that aesthetic experience is "impersonal" and "disinterested".<sup>2</sup>

Berenson has made an interesting contribution to the understanding of sensation in the appreciation of plastic art.

The essential feature of the figure arts, which reached their apogee in Greek sculpture, is, for him, the impression they convey of "tactile values" and "movement";

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 1-149.

<sup>2</sup> C. K. Ogden, I. A. Richards, James Wood: *The Foundations of Aesthetics*, pp. 72-91.

our imaginative sense of touch and grasp must be stimulated by the surface and outline of objects depicted at rest, our imaginative motor sense by the sight of things in movement. Therefore the best paintings are those that rouse in the spectator vivid imagined sensations of smoothness, roughness, softness, hardness, pressure, and of muscular contraction and relaxation in the different parts of the body; our aesthetic appreciation of the figure arts is, according to him, entirely the result of these represented tactile and kinaesthetic sensations. "Tactile values and movement, then, are the essential qualities in the figure arts, and no figure painting is real—has a value of its own apart from the story it has to tell, the ideal it has to present—unless it conveys ideated sensations of touch and movement."<sup>1</sup>

In a short polemic against the novel conclusions of Guyau, Séailles vindicates the disinterestedness of aesthetic experience by insisting on the indifference to beauty of bodily needs and sexual desire; he also refuses to confound the beautiful with the useful and the pleasant, on the ground that beauty resides neither in bare utility nor in the pleasures of the lower senses. He adds that, in his opinion, the future of art is perfectly secure, because, like science, metaphysics, and religion, it expresses an abiding and ineradicable need of the human spirit.<sup>2</sup>

For E. Bullough "psychic distance" is the essential and characteristic feature of the aesthetic attitude, a distance that is neither spatial nor temporal, but purely spiritual, a divorce in the contemplative mind between the self and its various affections; it results from "a putting of the object out of gear with our practical needs and ends", and is therefore a complete departure from the normal

<sup>1</sup> B. Berenson: *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup> G. Séailles: *L'Origine et les Destinées de l'Art*, pp. 1-44.

outlook.<sup>1</sup> This feature serves to distinguish aesthetic experience from the agreeable, from the useful, and from the pursuit of scientific or ethical values; the object has become an end in itself, and is no longer a means to pleasure, to practical purposes, to truth, or to the moral ideal.

What, according to Külpe, distinguishes the aesthetic attitude to art and nature profoundly from every other, including ordinary practical experience, is, as Schopenhauer had maintained, its contemplativeness, its concern with the object for its own sake, as an end in itself, as a "Kontemplationswert"; our attitude towards a landscape, for instance, becomes aesthetic directly we surrender ourselves to forms and colours, ignoring the woods and meadows in their qualitative actuality.<sup>2</sup>

The response of the spectator to the aesthetic object includes, in addition to the aesthetic judgment, the two essential features distinguished already by Fechner, one direct and the other indirect, relative, or associative, the immediate appreciation of colour and form and the thought and emotion, such as *Einfühlung*, evoked in his mind by the object of contemplation. So far it appears possible, with Lotze, Fechner, and Siebeck, to reduce the phenomenon of *Einfühlung* to the principle of the association of ideas; but,—and at this point the author parts company with the other associationists to join P. Stern—association is by no means always a loose sequence of different representations, and what distinguishes this process in the experience of beauty from every other brand of association is the unity, "Einheit", of the two factors, the complete fusion of image and recollection at the moment of perception, and the necessary connection

<sup>1</sup> E. Bullough: *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. V, pp. 89-91.

<sup>2</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, pp. 8, 89-93.

between them which excludes the vagaries of personal experience as a genuine source of delight.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of the average spectator of art is characterized, according to Müller-Freienfels, by a blending of projected sympathetic emotion, thanks to which his self appears to be mirrored in the object, and a calm, detached contemplation, during which the mind is utterly absorbed in the object and the self completely forgotten; it is neither purely emotional nor purely contemplative, but rather both at the same time. In this manner the Lippsian and the Schopenhauerian schools of thought may be reconciled. There are, however, two distinct psychological types, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the "Zuschauer" and the "Mitspieler", which represent the extreme attitudes of almost exclusively emotional and almost exclusively contemplative satisfaction in art, the former interpreting plastic art in terms of poetry and music, the latter, the intellectual, interpreting poetry and music in terms of the plastic arts.<sup>2</sup>

Such is the picture of artistic enjoyment in general; we may discriminate within this frame five component parts, the sensuous, the motor, the associative, the logical, and the emotional, which will attract or repel the spectator in proportion as he belongs to a sensuous, motor, imaginative, reflective, or emotional type. Sensuous enjoyment is restricted to the higher senses, to hearing and vision; muscular sensations are often projected, in spite of Lipps, in the animating act of *Einfühlung*, and the ordinary muscular accompaniment of perception is greatly enhanced; the associative factor is universal, general, and individual, according as the

<sup>1</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, pp. 94-122; *Über den assoziativen Faktor des ästhetischen Eindrucks*, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 51-73, 242-245.



spectator is aware of the actual subject portrayed, of its historical background, or of his own, personal past experience; the intellectual element includes judgments, definitions, and syllogistic argument; and we always experience, in addition to pleasure, pain, or a blending of the two, both "Mitaffekte", sympathetic emotions, and "Eigenaffekte", emotions produced by a personal reaction, hostile or friendly, to the work of art before us.<sup>1</sup>

The analysis of Witasek is based on an abstract and atomic psychology. The human mind contains representations, whether perceived, imagined, or remembered, acts of thought, which include real, fictitious, and hypothetical judgments, feelings of pleasure and pain, and, lastly, impulses and desires; this list exhausts the whole of its elementary contents. Now the aesthetic experience resides essentially in the category of feeling; but aesthetic feeling, "das ästhetische Gefühl", is, of course, a special and unique kind of feeling. It does not belong to the class of emotions, like real joy and sorrow, which are preceded by definite judgments; it does not even belong to all the great class preceded by perceived or remembered representations, for these in themselves may be either abstract or concrete. The latter variety only appears as the forerunner of aesthetic feeling. At this point a last distinction must be drawn; for all pleasures and pains attached to sensuous representations, specially those of the lower senses, can by no means be qualified as aesthetic. Feelings of this kind are only produced by the content, "Inhalt", of the representation, by the objects experienced in sensation and perceived, not by the act, "Akt", of sensation itself in the body of the spectator. This brings us at last to a definition of the aesthetic sentiment. Aesthetic feelings of satisfaction and dissatis-

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Vol. I, pp. 5-219.

faction are feelings of pleasure or pain, of which concrete representations are the psychic presuppositions, operating in such a way that it is especially their content that stimulates and determines the subsequent feeling.<sup>1</sup>

Einfühlung is regarded as a purely intellectual process, the bare representation of psychic activities, usually of an emotional order, which may be productive of real aesthetic sentiments, but is in itself quite devoid of feeling.<sup>2</sup> The aesthetic norm is the capacity of one and the same object to bring into being a similar aesthetic attitude in all spectators,<sup>3</sup> and art is that branch of human activity which is directed to the creation of objects with a favourable aesthetic effect.

W. T. Stace, better known for his work as an historian of philosophy and an exponent of Hegel, adapts the rationalism of this great metaphysician to the modern outlook by substituting empiricism and psychology for the German *a priori* deductive method of thinking.

"Beauty", he tells us, in a definition that applies as well to art as to nature, "is the fusion of an intellectual content, consisting of empirical non-perceptual concepts, with a perceptual field, in such manner that the intellectual content and the perceptual field are indistinguishable from one another; and in such manner as to constitute the revelation of an aspect of reality."<sup>4</sup> The perceptual field in this definition corresponds to the sensuous embodiment of idealism; the intellectual content corresponds to the spiritual significance. Now, as all science and philosophy is concerned with concepts, the perceptual character of the beautiful marks the essential difference between art on the one hand, and science

<sup>1</sup> S. Witasek: *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik*, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Zeitschrift für Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane*, Vol. XXV, pp. 1-50.

<sup>3</sup> *Grundzüge der allgemeinen Ästhetik*, p. 360.

<sup>4</sup> W. T. Stace: *The Meaning of Beauty*, p. 43.

and philosophy on the other.<sup>1</sup> The derivation of these concepts—such as evolution, progress, goodness—from actual experience, distinguishes them at once from the metaphysical absolute and from the abstract categories of knowledge, their non-perceptual character separates them from the individual imagery of ordinary perception, and their perfect fusion with a sensuous field divides real art from the mechanical associations of allegory.<sup>2</sup>

It follows that the ugly, such as a representation of moral evil, is in reality a species of the beautiful, and that its opposite is, not ugliness, but the unbeautiful or aesthetically indifferent<sup>3</sup>; and, besides, that aesthetic judgments have universal validity, being determined in particular instances by subsumption under a true concept, or one which reveals an aspect of reality.<sup>4</sup> Beauty is in part objective, in part subjective, the fusion between concepts and percepts occurring always within the human mind, but being conditioned, nevertheless, by the purely physical qualities of external objects.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. T. Stace: *The Meaning of Beauty*, pp. 9–18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 205–226.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67–83.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 129–133.

## B. OBJECTIVE THEORIES OF AESTHETICS

### CHAPTER XI

#### THE THEORY OF THE SCIENCE OF ART

AN important predecessor of the modern theorists of art science is H. Taine, whose aesthetic is a philosophy, not of beauty, but of the fine arts; he was also a founder of the empirical, historical, and comparative method proper to the natural sciences, as opposed to the deductive method of the nineteenth-century metaphysicians.

The fundamental purpose of every work of art is to manifest some essential or salient characteristic, "Quelque caractère essentiel", hence some important idea, more clearly and more completely than is achieved by real objects. The dominating characteristic in question may be either, as in botany or zoology, the most significant, that is to say the most stable and elementary, that from which all the others may be derived, or, on the other hand, the most beneficent, that which contributes most highly to the development of the individual and to the group to which he belongs.<sup>1</sup> This definition applies as well to architecture and music as to the so-called imitative arts, and provides a dual criterion, intellectual and moral, of artistic excellence; it clearly excludes all slavish imitation of persons or things.

The genesis and production of works of art are determined, not by internal, psychological forces, but by the sum of external influences, social, climatic, geographical, which together exert their natural pressure on the mind of the artist. To understand a work of art, an artist, or

<sup>1</sup> H. Taine: *Philosophie de l'Art*, Vol. I, pp. 41, 42; Vol. II, p. 344.

a group of artists, we should know exactly the general intellectual and social conditions of the age to which they belong, for therein lies the determining cause and the ultimate explanation of their activity.<sup>1</sup> The author illustrated his thesis by some opulent and scintillating courses delivered at the Louvre on Greek sculpture, the art of the Renaissance, and the Dutch and Flemish schools of painting, and by his vast and brilliant history of our own literature.

In Germany the illustrious Bavarian architect, G. Semper, was the founder and originator of art science. He conceived art itself to be a special process, development, or becoming in time,—“ein Kunstwerden”,—and the function of the aesthetician was in his opinion an empirical, genetic, and comparative study of this entire evolutionary process, a study which should culminate, as does the scientist's observation of nature, in the discovery, among a vast and heterogeneous aggregate of facts, of a few universal and recurring forms, motives, and types, and of their multiple causes and conditions. The theory of art, “die Kunstlehre”, cannot be called an art technique because it is concerned, not with production in any particular art, but with the development of them all; nor a history of art, because it reveals the inner laws which govern artistic evolution in its entirety rather than describing and explaining individual works; nor an abstract theory of beauty, because it is interested not merely in these universal and typical forms, but, besides, in the ideas, the forces, the technical processes, and the materials, which together produce them in the course of history.<sup>2</sup>

This very original theory is applied by Semper only

<sup>1</sup> H. Taine: *Philosophie de l'Art*, Vol. I, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> G. Semper: *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 6, 7.

to the plastic arts, and applied really thoroughly to the minor arts alone; for he starts, not from painting, sculpture, and architecture, the three summits of plastic art, but instead from the various industrial or applied arts as exemplified in decoration, arms, woven materials, pottery, porcelain, and furniture, those humble cousins of the major arts from whom they have borrowed their principal forms and motifs and whom they succeeded in order of chronological development. In a sketch for a comparative history of architecture,<sup>1</sup> the detailed application of these discoveries to a major art is just adumbrated.

These universal themes and forms of plastic art are determined by three separate factors; by the useful purpose, real or symbolical, which the object is destined to serve, by the raw material of which it is fashioned, and by the nature of the instruments and technical processes employed in its fabrication.<sup>2</sup>

K. Fiedler professes to concern himself, not with art as a whole,—for there is no such thing as art in general—but only with the plastic arts, and, as he lived on intimate terms with several prominent German painters, notably Hans von Marées, his findings are more especially relevant to the art of painting.

The artist is fundamentally interested in immediate, intuitive, perceptual experience, in “*Anschauung*”; for the artist the world is only perceptual appearance, and the work of art is a direct expression of this peculiar state of consciousness; the artist is thereby easily distinguished from the scientist and philosopher, for whom immediate experience is only a means towards the process of abstraction and the elaboration of concepts.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ueber Baustile.*

<sup>2</sup> *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten, oder praktische Ästhetik*, Vol. I, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> K. Fiedler: *Ueber die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst*, in *Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 3-79.

It is not the effort to express in perceptual form something of another order, like the aim and purpose of the object, still less the need to create a symbol for the reflective mind, and even less the desire to produce by means of what is presented to the eye a stimulus to sensation, that guides the fashioning hand; but rather the interest of sight itself, "das Interesse des Auges".<sup>1</sup> The artist is distinguished from the ordinary observant individual by his capacity for transforming the immediate perception into a concrete and material form; his relation to nature is not receptive and intuitive, but rather active and expressive. He has, unlike the layman, both vision and the power of recording it.

According to E. Grosse the real aim of the science of art, "die Kunstwissenschaft", is a complete and comprehensive knowledge of the nature of art itself, of the multiple causes of art, and of its various effects; the primary purpose of the science of art, as in all true science, is the understanding, not the application, of general laws, and in this case of the particular laws which control the life and development of the arts.<sup>2</sup>

When studying seriously the ultimate nature of this phenomenon, the aesthetician should not limit himself, like Taine and Guyau, to any orthodox art history, which is confined and limited to a description, in isolation from its social environment, of European art from classical antiquity to the present day; he should make use, primarily, of the complex data supplied by ethnography and ethnology, which include the artistic productions of primitive and prehistoric peoples in every quarter of the globe, and their links with the social milieu in which

<sup>1</sup> *Ueber den Ursprung der künstlerischen Tätigkeit*, in *Schriften*, Vol. I, pp. 187-367, 349, 350.

<sup>2</sup> E. Grosse: *The Beginnings of Art*, p. 7; *Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien*, p. 4.

they arose. The less fundamental task of understanding the causes and conditions of art issues, on the one hand, in a gauging of the influence exercised by the raw materials employed, and, on the other, in an attentive examination of the forces,—psychological, social, cultural, climatic, or geographical,—which together determine the character of the creative activity; and finally, the effects of art should be carefully examined, both on the individual and on the society to which he belongs.<sup>1</sup>

The artistic activity is, in the opinion of Grosse, one which possesses, either in the course of its development or as its direct result, an immediate feeling value—in art it is usually a pleasurable one; this distinguishes it clearly from all practical activities which are no more than the means to achieving ulterior ends. It is influenced not merely, as Stuart Mill had believed, by the artist himself, in isolation from an audience of listeners or spectators, but also by the public for whom he deliberately works; art is never, even at the height of civilization, a purely individual phenomenon, and the art of primitive peoples is at bottom “a social phenomenon and a social function”. Individual and separate arts manifest either movement and temporal succession, like poetry and music, or forms in complete repose, like the plastic and the graphic arts; the dance, which used always to be accompanied by music and song, is a kind of animated sculpture, and represents a transition from the arts of rest to those of motion.

The art historian A. Schmarsow maintains also that the real aim of the science of art, “Kunstwissenschaft”, as distinct from that of orthodox psychological aesthetics, is to acquire exhaustive knowledge of the laws which govern the life and development of art as a whole; the history of civilized art merely supplies some of the data

<sup>1</sup> *Beginnings of Art*, pp. 9–13; *Kunstwissenschaftliche Studien*, pp. 3–16.



required for this ambitious purpose, the rest being furnished by the ethnological studies of the artistic activity of primitive peoples.<sup>1</sup>

Art, according to this historian turned philosopher, is one variety of man's spiritual understanding of the world in which he is placed; it belongs, with religion, science, and the moral order, to the great domain of culture, and it differs from these because, on the one hand, it is a creative understanding, "eine schöpferische Auseinandersetzung", which issues in certain determinate and permanent works, the fruit of the creative activity, and, on the other, as gratifying the natural desire for harmony, "Einklang", within the human personality and between it and the external world, a concord which follows naturally the satisfaction of the entire man.<sup>2</sup>

Now artistic creation and the artistic attitude to things are essentially "anthropomorphic", interpreting external objects, other than our fellow-men, by analogy with the peculiarities of our own nature and our own physical structure. Thus we derive from our person the three great principles which govern every form of artistic productivity, proportion, symmetry, and rhythm. For the perception of the vertical axis of our own and other bodies gives the proportion of parts placed one above the other, the ruling principle of the dimension of length; the co-ordinated activity of our two hands and our two eyes gives symmetry, the ruling principle of the dimension of breadth, while the performance of a simple movement gives rhythm, the ruling principle of the third dimension, that of depth.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. II, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> A. Schmarsow: *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 33, 45; *Plastik, Malerei, und Reliefkunst*, pp. 218-220; *Unser Verhältnis zu den bildenden Künsten*, pp. 18-20; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. II, p. 310; Bd. XIV, pp. 165-190.

<sup>3</sup> *Grundbegriffe der Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 41, 45.

Now human personality is also the common source and mother of all the arts, which owe their origin to emotion accompanied by expressive bodily movements, a unified psycho-physical complex that we resolve by analysis into its two constituent elements. Thus, among the temporal arts, the spoken word is in reality a gesture in sound, "Lautgebärde", being at once a distinct sound and the throat and lip movements involved in articulation; both these factors in combination produce poetry, while gesture alone is the foundation of mime and sound alone that of music. Among the spatial arts we find the image, "Bild", a two-dimensional representation of bodies in surrounding space, to be the simple and fundamental ingredient, and, while painting includes both constituents of the visional image, sculpture, the fashioner of bodies, works with one of these in isolation, architecture, the fashioner of space, operates with the other. It follows from this that poetry is the highest and least primitive of the arts of time, just as painting is the highest of the arts of space and repose.<sup>1</sup>

This general theory of art is applied in detail only to the plastic arts, of which the author had most knowledge and personal experience. Architecture is *par excellence* the moulder, not of human or animal bodies in isolation or in the open space by which they are surrounded, but of space itself in all its three dimensions; it is essentially "die Raumgestalterin".<sup>2</sup> Sculpture, on the other hand, is fundamentally the fashioner of isolated bodies, "die Körperbildnerin", and it pursues as its principal aim the glorification of our own organic form; the plastic problem of the sculptor as such, and with it the most charac-

<sup>1</sup> *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. II, pp. 316, 317, 336, 337, 469.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen*, p. 14; *Barock und Rococo*, p. 5; *Unser Verhältnis zu den bildenden Künsten*, pp. 103, 104.

teristic feature of sculpture as an art, can only be sought in the creative representation of the body itself.<sup>1</sup>

The half-way kingdom between sculpture and painting is occupied by the art of relief, for though, like painting, it represents bodies immersed in their environment, it nevertheless employs the material medium, the various hard substances, which properly belong to the sculptor's art; it is not possible to establish an absolutely rigid barrier between the different varieties of relief, but a line may be roughly drawn between flat relief, high relief, and deep relief.<sup>2</sup>

Painting adopts the creative function of its two sister arts, architecture as the moulder of space and sculpture as the fashioner of bodies, and tries to unite on a flat surface the two elements which these have treated separately; the final aim of the picture remains the unity of bodies and space, and this we can only expect from the medium which exists between them, that is, in air and light and the glow of colours which permeate every part and connect all objects with one another and with their environment; it is neither the isolated forms of bodies nor space as such, which is the object of the painter, but only the connection—"Zusammenhang"—that reigns within the represented boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Drawing and engraving, the graphic arts, share with painting the representation on a flat surface of objects in their surrounding space, but they abandon colour and, by stimulating the imagination to complete what is given directly in perception, entice us into the land of poetry; in fact they

<sup>1</sup> *Plastik, Malerei, und Reliefkunst*, pp. 48, 53, 54, 124, 134; *Unser Verhältnis zu den bildenden Künsten*, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup> *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen*, pp. 40, 41; *Plastik, Malerei, und Reliefkunst*, pp. 153-154, 168-187.

<sup>3</sup> *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen*, pp. 36, 37, 63, 75, 83; *Plastik, Malerei, und Reliefkunst*, pp. 17, 39, 40; *Unser Verhältnis zu den bildenden Künsten*, pp. 116, 128, 129.

depict thoughts, which otherwise may only be expressed in words.<sup>1</sup>

A writer concerned simply with a close analysis of the real nature of the aesthetic object, and, more particularly, of the finished products of the artistic activity, is B. Christiansen. He asks himself what are their essential constituent elements, how these are co-ordinated in space and time, and to what category, causal or substantial, the work of art itself belongs; the conclusion he reaches is that such things are composed of emotional moods, "Stimmungsimpressionen", produced deliberately by their raw material, their form, and the subject they represent, and related to one another by the operation of successive fusion, and that they belong to the category of teleology, as their separate parts and various factors are co-ordinated and subordinated by an initial artistic purpose.<sup>2</sup>

Art in essence is an appearance of the activity and development of impulse, "der Schein einer Triebentfaltung", the psychic tendencies which it reveals being those connected either with the biological impulse to preserve life or with the higher moral impulse, which inspires self-sacrificing devotion to duty, art, knowledge, or religion, and transforms life itself from an end to a means. This demands a disinterested and contemplative attitude on the part of the spectator, a complete freedom from the spur of personal desire; for only thus can he become sufficiently passive to experience the emotion embodied in the object by its creator instead of his own private moods, conflicts, and longings.<sup>3</sup>

The most interesting contribution to aesthetics from the other side of the Atlantic is that of the poet-philosopher

<sup>1</sup> *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen*, pp. 81-94; *Plastik, Malerei, und Reliefkunst*, pp. 134-136.

<sup>2</sup> B. Christiansen: *Philosophie der Kunst*, pp. 127-131.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135-188.

sopher G. L. Raymond; his work comprises eight stout volumes, of which two are devoted to art and beauty in general, the remainder applying to the individual arts the general principles there delineated.

In a definition which aims at a reconciliation between the conflicting views of those who have regarded beauty as immediate, formal, and dependent only on the senses and perception,<sup>1</sup> and those others who have treated it as mediate and expressive, involving besides emotion and recollection, a definition which applies as well to nature as to art, the beautiful is described as "a characteristic of any complex form of varied elements producing apprehensible unity of effects upon the motive organs of sensation in the eye or ear, or upon the motive forces of imagination in the mind; or upon both the one and the other".<sup>1</sup>

Let us now pass from the wider to the narrower term, from beauty to art. Art is the "representation" in an external and material shape of the appearances and occurrences of nature, and, besides, of the thoughts and emotions which the mind has come to associate with such forms; it is "representative" rather than imitative of natural appearances, and it does not present emotion and thought directly, but "represents" them too, by the indirect means of a material medium.<sup>2</sup> This is tantamount to saying that art is nature made human, or nature remade by the human mind.<sup>3</sup>

This leads us to the task of tracing the two dominating features of art, ideal significance and form, through the gigantic labyrinth of the major arts. But how is art to be distinguished from other human values, such as science and religion? In religion the subconscious mind plays

<sup>1</sup> G. L. Raymond: *Essentials of Aesthetics*, p. 32; *Art in Theory*, p. 162; *Proportion and Harmony of Line and Colour*, pp. 419-439.

<sup>2</sup> *Essentials of Aesthetics*, pp. 68-129.

<sup>3</sup> *Art in Theory*, p. 6.

a far more important part than consciousness itself, in science conscious reflection dominates the unconscious, while in art the two aspects of the mind blend harmoniously together. Thus religious conceptions are derived, though not necessarily entirely developed, from the inner and subconscious world through inspiration; scientific conceptions are derived from the outer world through investigation; while art results partly from observation of the outer world, and partly from inspiration from the subconscious inner world, the two being correlated by means of the artistic imagination. Again, the religious consciousness is characterized by faith, scientific conceptions are characterized by knowledge, while art, which produces ideals, that is to say ideas of known objects, events, or experiences, embellished by the imagination, is characterized by ideality. Finally, the expression of religious conceptions is a spiritually influential suggestion, being embodied in utterances that are suggestive rather than literally true, scientific thought is expressed in logical formulations, while works of art become expressive by analogical representation, each material form incorporating the ideal significance it resembles.<sup>1</sup>

From this digression into generalities we can now pass to art. The various methods of expressing emotion in poetry, of verbal expression, such as duration or speed of words, the quality of vowel and consonantal sounds, or tropes, are all ultimately derived from spoken language.<sup>2</sup> Music achieves its profound significance by means of the duration,—fast or slow—pitch,—high or low—force,—loud or soft—and quality or timbre of its tones, and it is derived partly from the sustained and instinctive sounds expressive of human emotion, and partly from the sounds of nature, which it either imitates or resembles

<sup>1</sup> *The Representative Significance of Form*, pp. 61–207.

<sup>2</sup> *Poetry as a Representative Art*.

in its proper medium.<sup>1</sup> The plastic arts attain the same goal by means of size, of spatial extension, or shape, such as the gestures and facial movements of the human body, or colour and tone.<sup>2</sup>

To turn now from the expressive to the formal qualities of the arts. The author, having traced the elementary and fundamental principles of unity, which involves comparison, and variety, which involves contrast, through all the major arts,<sup>3</sup> then proceeds to consider each of these in detail. Rhythm in poetry and music is apparent whenever the mind is directly conscious of unity in duration, harmony in these arts when the mind is unconscious of the unity within a manifold of musical tones or articulated sounds, such as actually exists in melody and harmony.<sup>4</sup> In the visual arts proportion corresponds to rhythm in the arts of sound, the mind being clearly conscious of unity in the complexity of extended forms, while harmony of tone or colour corresponds to musical harmony, the mind in this case being quite unconscious of the common factor which pervades the whole.<sup>5</sup> Now the scientific study of art is not merely philosophical, it is also practical; and the principles here enunciated furnish standards for the judgment of the critic and guidance for the work of the professional artist.<sup>6</sup>

H. Wölfflin, the very eminent historian of art, does not care to investigate the nature of the beautiful as such, or even the essence of beauty, ugliness, and aesthetic indifference in the plastic arts; he is simply concerned with isolating a number of very general artistic forms, or manners of artistic vision, which have made their

<sup>1</sup> *Music as a Representative Art*, in *Rhythm and Harmony in Poetry and Music*, pp. 231-323.

<sup>2</sup> *Painting, Sculpture and Architecture as Representative Arts*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Genesis of Art-Form*.

<sup>4</sup> *Rhythm and Harmony in Poetry and Music*, pp. 1-228.

<sup>5</sup> *Proportion and Harmony of Line and Colour*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 419-439.

appearance in European art, classical or baroque, during and since the Renaissance.

In the first place, there is a striking contrast between the linear and the pictorial styles, "das Lineare und das Malerische"; the linear artist sees things in sharp outline, the pictorial artist sees things in voluminous masses, the former renders objects as they really are, the latter only as they appear to the eye.<sup>1</sup> The primitives, for example, were essentially linear draughtsmen and linear painters, the impressionists and their greatest spiritual ancestors, on the other hand, Rembrandt, Velazquez, and the Venetian school, and, besides, the baroque and rococo masters in sculpture and architecture, were fundamentally pictorial artists.

Four antithetical developments in style, of distinctly minor importance, may also be observed. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, despite the discovery of linear perspective and chiaroscuro, both stress the dimensions of length and breadth, the flat surface, as contrasted with the dominating importance of the third dimension in the two succeeding centuries.<sup>2</sup> The classical age, the eighteenth century, likes to use the closed form, for it is in the habit of seeing its subject as a complete and bounded whole, in severe isolation from all its surroundings; whereas baroque art always suggests the absence of hard-and-fast boundaries, the baroque artist sees his subject as no more than the fragment of a greater whole and employs therefore the open form.<sup>3</sup>

Again, there is the important distinction between varied and uniform unity within an individual work of art. The classical style achieves a unity of the entire work while allowing each part the freedom of an independent member, whereas the baroque style sacrifices the independence

<sup>1</sup> H. Wölfflin: *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. 20, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-129.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130-162.



of the parts in favour of a uniform motif which dominates throughout; in the former case we find co-ordination, in the latter strict subordination.<sup>1</sup> And lastly, there is the degree of clarity with which objects and figures are depicted, the deliberate obscurity of Rembrandt and the masters of the baroque and rococo periods contrasting sharply with the luminous clarity of Dürer, Leonardo, and their fellows in the classical age.<sup>2</sup>

Another art historian, W. Worringer, maintains that psychological aesthetics, of which beauty in the narrow sense is the right and proper object, has restricted its investigation in the past to classical European art, to the artistic productions of ancient Greece and Europe since the Renaissance, so that a new science of art is seriously needed for the study of other and different styles; he has himself contributed a monograph on the architectural style of the Gothic period.<sup>3</sup>

E. Utitz and M. Dessoir are the most important contemporary protagonists of the general science of art in the sphere of philosophy. According to the former, what distinguishes the science of art, "allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft", from traditional aesthetics is that it is essentially a philosophy of art, "Philosophie der Kunst", the science of the value and nature of art, and that its legitimate object is provided by the great fact and reality of this domain, whose character is the fundamental problem it attempts to solve. For, as aesthetics is not adequate to the whole phenomenon of art, and as the individual artistic disciplines stand in need of general principles, it appears that a new science should insert itself, a science that would share with aesthetics its generality and with the individual arts their material; namely, artistic productions themselves, with the totality of their relations

<sup>1</sup> H. Wölfflin: *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, pp. 163-203.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 204-236.      <sup>3</sup> W. Worringer: *Form in Gothic*, pp. 7-11.

and conditions. The province of aesthetics being confined to the beautiful, to the purely aesthetic, fails to embrace the sociological, ethical, intellectual, and metaphysical features presented by the world of art.<sup>1</sup>

Art itself is always a representation of values which aims directly at arousing emotion in the spectator, "eine Auferweckung eines Gefühlserlebens zielende Darstellung von Werten", and therefore distinct both from mechanical imitation and from utilitarian and scientific construction, which pursue entirely different aims; of course, it is not only aesthetic value, pure beauty, that is embodied in the work of art, but any value—ethical, religious, intellectual, patriotic—that may happen to appeal to the individual artist or to the society in which he lives and labours.<sup>2</sup>

The actual productions of the artistic spirit are divided into two vast classes, according as they aim primarily at rousing a purely aesthetic experience, or serve in the first place some other end; this is not, as it might appear, a division of the field between the fine and the applied arts, for it places in the same category all works destined for any heterogeneous purpose whatever, and so separates individual art products rather than the individual arts.<sup>3</sup>

The purely aesthetic element of our experience in face of art or nature, which is realized most completely in the category of the beautiful, is a disinterested contemplation, tinged with feeling, of valuable appearances; it is therefore distinct from the practical attitude, from all sensuous pleasures unattached to valuable objects, and its source is in appearance rather than mental or physical reality.

<sup>1</sup> E. Utitz: *Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. I, pp. 31, 32; Vol. II, p. 424; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. XVI, pp. 443-451.

<sup>2</sup> *Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. I, pp. 51, 64, 68; Vol. II, p. 4; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. XVI, pp. 433-451.

<sup>3</sup> *Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. I, pp. 231-234.

It enters into the appreciation of art without by any means exhausting it.<sup>1</sup>

The second volume of the author's principal work is devoted to the three important problems of the work of art, the artist, and art in general.

The unity of the work of art, notwithstanding the multiplicity of its necessary conditions, is obtained by means of the single dominating purpose—the awakening of emotion and feeling—to which its several conditions are subordinate in a strictly functional relationship. The conditions of its existence are five in all; the nature of the raw material,—“Material”—the attitude of the artistic spectator,—“Kunstverhalten”—the method of representation,—“Darstellungsweise”—the value and the level of existence represented by it,—“Darstellungswert, Seins-schicht”. Each material furnishes specific and peculiar opportunities for the artist, who has besides to satisfy the professional critic as well as the naïf public, and to cater for the vastly different psychological types described by Müller-Freienfels; he may represent people and things by means of graceful, harmonious, or passionate forms, he may represent the higher as well as the lower values, and his personal outlook will decide whether his finished work exhibits an idealistic or a realistic style.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the widely held opinion that the difference between talent and genius is purely quantitative, that the genius is simply more gifted than the ordinary talented artist, Utitz maintains that they differ in quality or kind, like blue and red or black and white.<sup>3</sup> Now wherever values exist, there will be corresponding laws in the sense of norms, formulated in the following fashion; if you

<sup>1</sup> *Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. I, pp. 87–100, 106, 118, 119–122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 1–159.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 279–283.

sincerely desire to realize this value, you must act in this particular way and in no other. In the case of artistic values, the norms in question are only able to instruct the onlooker in the right attitude and response to the work of art, and not to supply precepts for the creative activity of the artist.<sup>1</sup>

Dessoir, like Utitz, believes in the necessity for a sharp separation between the philosophy of beauty—called aesthetics—and the philosophy of art. It is the duty of the general science of art, “allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft”, to do justice to the great fact of art in all its relations; aesthetics cannot accomplish this task if it is to remain true to its own clearly bounded and limited province, the realm of beauty in art and nature. Hence it is that Dessoir divides his own *magnum opus* into two parts,<sup>2</sup> the first an aesthetic, dealing with the most general qualities of aesthetic objects, the aesthetic impression, the aesthetic categories, the history of this branch of philosophical speculation, the second a general science of art, devoted to the problems of artistic creation and the artistic personality, of the origin and division of the arts, of the exact nature of each individual art, and of the place and function of art itself—in relation to science, to society, to right conduct, to religion and metaphysics—in human life and experience as a whole.

Now these two disciplines of aesthetics and art science are, like every pure or applied science of mind or nature, not merely descriptive of a certain phase of experience but also normative, inasmuch as they set up ideals to which practice should correspond; the real difference between theoretical knowledge and an ordinary technique lies in the distinct aims which they pursue, the

<sup>1</sup> *Grundlegung der allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, Vol. II, pp. 285–289.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 1–226, 229–465.

former endeavouring to reach a logical clarity that provides precepts for right thinking, the latter striving after a practical mastery which legislates for the will of those who would achieve it.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the other outstanding German aestheticians of the present century, and in spite of his metaphysical belief in the existence of a third kingdom, "drittes Reich", apart from the lower realms of mind and nature, a kingdom of absolute values, the aesthetic speculation of Dessoir is deeply tinged by a scepticism that colours his entire outlook. Scepticism in general consists of an earnest doubt about the possibility of unequivocal truths, of universally valid theories, and of complete and final philosophical systems. But, leaving the wider province aside, there are special reasons for this attitude in regard to aesthetics and the general science of art. For there can be little doubt that the contributory sciences on which these disciplines are founded, ethnology, the individual art sciences, psychology, and philosophy, are themselves fragmentary and discrepant in their present state, and, besides, that "the intensive and extensive multiplicity" of the different aesthetic phenomena, the many varieties and the extraordinary delicacy of the experience of beauty, present an insuperable obstacle to the progress of exact science in this domain.<sup>2</sup>

By objectivism in aesthetics the author does not imply that the aesthetic categories, including the beautiful, are to be found as real qualities of things, but that those objects which provoke aesthetic experience in nature, art, or culture, possess specific characteristics of a distinct and material kind. Subjectivism in this sphere includes all such theories as neglect the objective features in the experience of beauty, and consider their task complete

<sup>1</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 94-97.

<sup>2</sup> *Beiträge zur allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 1-19.

when they have observed and analysed the aesthetic attitude of men to things.

Evidence in support of objectivism, in this sense, is abundant. In aesthetic perception, for instance, there is a peculiar relation between material forms, colours, or different elements in a temporal series; then delight in shapes and forms depends on the degree of resemblance within the variety of its different parts that an object presents to the eye, and, besides, that type of *Einfühlung* which involves the projection of fettered and unfettered striving, of volitional states, is absolutely dependent for its efficacy on the peculiar structure of the external object.

It follows that aesthetic reality and aesthetic laws cannot possibly be restricted to the purely psychological sphere, but should rather be extended to include those features of art, nature, and culture, that represent the permanent and unchanging conditions of the experience of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

In an analysis of the aesthetic impression, the author informs us that pleasure, the result and product of the experience, is a general characteristic that accompanies the perception of beauty in all its forms; this holds true even of the tragic and the ugly, for here suffering produces in us a more vivid consciousness of our own existence.

The three essential factors of the whole aesthetic impression are the "*Sinnesgefühle*", the immediate effect on our senses of contact with an aesthetic object, the "*Formgefühle*", which are represented by the immediate effect of the perception of formal qualities, and lastly the "*Inhaltsgefühle*", which include both the instantaneous operation of *Einfühlung* and the mediate and indirect action of associations. In sensation the primary channels

<sup>1</sup> *Beiträge zur allgemeinen Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 20-33.

are the so-called higher senses, sight and hearing; they furnish complete images, whereas the others are only able to contribute fragments, they can be far more easily reproduced, and they are, besides, more completely divorced from the satisfaction of our primordial organic needs. The inner muscular or kinaesthetic sense is frequently of assistance to us in the appreciation of stationary or moving objects, though its importance has been grossly exaggerated by those who consider it a necessary condition of all aesthetic enjoyment. Formal qualities, such as harmony in music, symmetry, proportion, metre and rhythm, are also productive of very vivid delight.

The third and last ingredient of our aesthetic consciousness comprehends both artistic sympathy, "feste Einfühlung", wherein our moods and activities are immediately fused with objective forms—as when we speak of a boldly arched nose, a proud forehead, a melancholy eye, or a rectangle that lies or another that stands upright—and, besides, common or garden association, "freie Assoziation", those recollections evoked in our minds by the aesthetic object and existing simultaneously with it and beside it.<sup>1</sup>

In his treatment of artistic creation, Dessoir follows very closely the work of von Hartmann. He distinguishes, with him, five successive and separate stages in the development of the creative process. The productive mood, an emotional disturbance which heralds the creative activity, the conception, or the fruition of inspiration by the sudden appearance in imagination of the future work, the rough sketch in which the artist first attempts to embody it in a material form, a moment that usually reacts on the imaginative conception itself; the inner elaboration, whereby the work of art is consciously and deliberately completed in the artist's mind, and finally

<sup>1</sup> *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 154-193.

its exteriorization by incorporation, thanks to a special technique, in some material medium.<sup>1</sup>

Dessoir is in agreement with those who find ill-health, abnormality, a pathological trait of some kind or other, an inevitable feature in the personality of the great artist; but the lunatic is a degenerate, while the genius points forward in the teleological scheme. There is a qualitative difference between men, according as they have come into the world to preserve themselves and their species, or to perform some lofty task for the ennoblement and spiritual progress of humanity; but the mind is always a parasite of the body, and the "Leistungsmensch" can never expect to enjoy the balanced and mediocre well-being experienced by the "Zeugungsmensch".<sup>2</sup>

A large portion of his work is devoted to the consideration of the material product of the artist, as it exists quite independently of either the creator himself or the spectator whom it delights; at this point the author, having effected a division between the spatial arts of sculpture, painting, and architecture, extended and in repose, and the temporal arts of mime, poetry, and music, which are in succession and movement, scrutinizes carefully each individual and particular art, starting from the arts of time and concluding with the arts of space.<sup>3</sup>

The essential constitutive elements of the art of music are rhythm, the temporal and stress relations between separate tones within a musical composition; melody, or the height and depth of successive musical tones, the timbre or colour of the sound emitted by the musical instrument or human voice, and harmony of a consonant or dissonant order. The truly artistic significance of the art of music lies, on the one hand, in its structure, which must be followed and understood,—good music

<sup>1</sup> *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 229–240.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 262–269.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302–422.



is a combination of forms in sound and movement—and, on the other, in its extraordinary power of indeterminate emotional expressiveness.

Gesture is the essential feature of the art of the theatre, of mime; in the dumb speech of gesture lies the proper and peculiar tongue of the actor, whose fundamental task and purpose is a display and shadowing forth of the dramatic movements of the human soul.

There are three separate branches to the art of words. Oratory and drama, which belong together and are connected externally and in practice with mime; narrative prose and poetry, which has evolved from the ancient epic to the modern novel and short story; and poetry proper, represented most adequately by the lyric. The author challenges the traditional doctrine that the poetic handling of this medium is to be found in the rousing of vivid and concrete images by means of words, and affirms that artistic delight may be derived from abstractions and purely verbal propositions alone.

The plastic arts fall naturally into two groups, non-representative and representative, of which the first includes architecture and the minor or applied arts, the second sculpture and relief, landscape, portrait, genre, religious, and historical painting, in addition to the graphic arts of etching, lithography, and wood and copper-plate engraving. Those objects which belong to the sphere of industrial or applied art should fulfil their practical purpose and yet be sufficiently stylized to appear free from its rude compulsion. Architecture is essentially the abstract fashioning of space; a severely practical aim moulds to a great extent the shape of the interior, and thereby indirectly the external structure of the entire building. But the power of need alone does not raise it to the level of an art; for this we must be enabled to enjoy the elegance and harmony of architectural forms

despite their utilitarian function. Sculpture is fundamentally concerned with the external shape and structure of bodies, while light and colour constitute the peculiar province of painting, and line is the common essence of the various graphic arts.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE THEORY OF NATURE

THOUGH we read Ruskin primarily for the incomparable eloquence and sumptuous colouring of his descriptive prose, his great work on Turner is also a substantial contribution to a much neglected aspect of aesthetic science. His general attitude to beauty is, of course, vitiated by ethical and theological preoccupations. The faculty with which we respond to artistic or natural beauty is, not the intelligence or the senses but our "moral perception", and the satisfaction it affords us lies in agreement with our moral nature in its purity and perfection; while the irresistible attractiveness of Gothic architecture is to be found, in part at least, in its embodiment of the three great Christian virtues of "truth, sacrifice, and obedience".<sup>1</sup> Beauty itself is of two kinds, "Typical" and "Vital"; the former appears whenever an object suggests or symbolizes an attribute of the Deity such as infinity, unity, permanence, justice, or moderation, the latter is clearly manifest in "the felicitous fulfilment of function in living things", and "the joyful and right exercise of perfect life in man".<sup>2</sup>

But it is rather to his description and classification of natural forms that we have to turn for an original and enduring addition to our subject. In the first volume of *Modern Painters* we are introduced to the most general features of earth, air, and water, to the three provinces of the sky, cirrus, cloud of the central region, and rain-cloud, to the structure of mountain, rock, and soil, to water by land and sea, and to vegetation.

<sup>1</sup> J. Ruskin: *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Painters*, Vol. II, pp. 13-150.

Later, we descend to a more thorough and detailed study of these phenomena. Mountains are found to reveal lateral ranges, central peaks, aiguilles, crests, and precipices; plant life consists either of "tented plants", which include flowers and other vegetation growing close to the soil, or of "building plants", represented by the tree and shrub tribes which are themselves divided into the "shield-builders" with their smooth, expanded, leaves,—such as oak and rhododendron—and the often coniferous "sword-builders", whose leaves are always narrow and sharp; the clouds possess two favourite formations, "massive" and "striated", the former being constituted by ponderous fleecy masses in which no lines are visible, the latter by an arrangement of almost parallel lines.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Stratz has asserted, in his learned work on the beauty of the female body, that the physical beauty of women depends on their approximation to an ideal type, obtained by measuring the proportions of a large number of well-built bodies and constructing from these an average or typical figure; this, of course, only represents the ideal of the white race, different results being procured from a similar treatment of negroes or Mongols.<sup>2</sup> The perfect figure, which is equivalent to perfect biological development and complete healthiness, provides a standard above and apart from the arbitrary personal judgment.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Painters*, Vol. I, pp. 216-432; Vol. IV, pp. 86-335; Vol. V, pp. 7-112.

<sup>2</sup> C. H. Stratz: *Die Schönheit des weiblichen Körpers*, pp. 44-62.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

THE brilliant work of Y. Hirn on the origins of art is partly psychological, and partly sociological, as it employs modern psychological methods for a study of the art impulse, before laying bare, by means of ethnology and anthropology, the influence of external and social forces on the development of primitive art.

The expression of the emotions is both individual and social. Every emotional state tends to manifest itself externally, the effect of such a manifestation being to heighten the pleasure and to relieve the pain which accompanies it; but, a secondary effect of this exteriorization is to awaken sympathetic emotion in others who perceive it, and this, in turn, reacts upon the original emotion, increasing its intensity and so also the accompanying pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

So much for the expression of emotion in general, and its relation to feeling. Now the instinctive tendency to express such overpowering sentiments, to enhance pleasure, and to seek relief from pain, is more completely satisfied by artistic production than by any other variety of human activity; the artist not only expresses freely his own emotions, but he endeavours besides to lend them a permanent form—the work of art—which will facilitate their revival in an ever-wider circle of sympathizers. Thus, from a reflex outlet for powerful emotional pressure, we are led to a deliberate creative process, in which the intellectual and volitional elements preponderate increasingly over the automatic emotional impulse.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Y. Hirn: *The Origins of Art*, p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-142, 298-306.

If the pure art impulse, as distinct from every extraneous and foreign influence, consists in this deliberate expression of emotion in enduring forms, actual works of art exhibit the trace of many different and alien forces. In primitive art, for instance, where practical motives are overwhelmingly in the ascendant, these aesthetically indifferent factors in artistic production are as follows.

Prior to organized language, the mimic dance, narrative poem, or drawing on cloth, bark, or sand, were employed to communicate news about events in the present, or, as commemorative art,—quite unknown among the most primitive hunting and fishing tribes—they perpetuated the memory of epoch-making events in the past; their function was therefore to convey information. The dance, song, and lyrical effusion, are also occasionally found as instruments for attracting the opposite sex.

The rhythm of song has been often used to assist the daily labours of an individual or a group, while war has been responsible for those varieties of dance and personal adornment which serve either to stimulate bravery, or to terrify an enemy, or to impart and implant a military discipline. And lastly, that form of sympathetic magic which claims to act on a person or a thing by means of another which resembles it, has given birth, all the world over, to imitative figures and drawings,—“volts”—and to descriptive incantations by professional sorcerers.<sup>1</sup>

Art is treated by Wundt as one of those great domains in which the mind of peoples has expressed itself, these being classified, in his ten volumes on the subject, according to the character of their spiritual products and experiences, so as to give, for instance, language, art, mythology, and religion. Each of these activities may be traced to specific individual functions, but they owe their significance for the psychology of peoples to the necessity,

<sup>1</sup> Y. Hirn: *The Origins of Art*, pp. 147-277.

if they are to be completely developed, for strict conformity to certain conditions of the collective life.

Art itself occupies an intermediate position between language and myth; on the one hand, artistic production is a particular continuation of expressive movements, inasmuch as it fixes in permanent form what is transitory in gesture and speech, on the other, the imaginative representations of mythology originally constituted the most important content of art.<sup>1</sup>

Let us now proceed to investigate the nature of imagination, "die Phantasie", which is the most striking feature of the artistic world. Its essential trait resides in a formative or constructive activity, which appears as well in the mere reproduction of acquired contents of the mind—the passive imagination—as in the novel productions of the active imagination, of which the elements only were contained in past experience. Nevertheless, the most striking examples of its formative activity are to be found in the products of the active imagination.

More thoroughly analysed, this constructive function reveals three separate characteristics. First, an animating apperception, "eine belebende Apperzeption", which projects the self of the spectator into the object and thus includes what aestheticians have called *Einfühlung*; they have thereby explained both the effect of the impression on the mind of the spectator, and the immediate relation of the subjective feeling to the object. This principle of apperception is by no means confined to the aesthetic attitude, for it governs the mind at every period of its development. It rules more or less undisturbed in the perceptual world of the child, and it invades periodically the representations of the mature individual. Above all, it animates the productions of the artistic spirit in their entirety, from the simplest geometrical ornament to the

<sup>1</sup> W. Wundt: *Völkerpsychologie*, Vol. III, pp. 3-12.

most complex musical or artistic creation. The second trait is that of the intensification of feelings by assimilation. This appears in the greater intensity of those feelings and emotions attached to the reproduced elements which are assimilated to an immediate impression. And finally, there is the autonomous activity of consciousness in the moulding of perceptual images; this feature is of special importance in artistic production, and it is the foundation of the inventive imagination.

Imagination in general having been so defined, we are at liberty to proceed to its two great forms, spatial and temporal, "*Raumphantasie und Zeitphantasie*". The former signifies the capacity of consciousness for producing spatial objects independent of any previous model and corresponding to nothing given directly in perception, and, besides, to endow the representation of objects roused by external impressions with definite properties they do not in fact possess. The latter, on the other hand, depends entirely on the sense of hearing, and its material is sound.<sup>1</sup>

The most interesting exponent of the sociological theory in France is C. Lalo. Aesthetics is conceived by this notable French sociologist as a philosophy of art, "*une philosophie de l'art*", or—what is exactly equivalent—as a philosophy of the criticism and history of art; its scientific foundations are constituted by the facts, the laws, the methods, in short the results of every kind, acquired by the still recent experience of certain specialized disciplines, art history and art criticism. The programme of a complete aesthetic would therefore include the individual and social conditions, anaesthetic or aesthetically indifferent in themselves, of all artistic production, as well as a study of the artistic materials and institutions which are already in existence; it would thus be in turn

<sup>1</sup> W. Wundt: *Völkerpsychologie*, Vol. III, pp. 15-25.



mathematical, physiological, psychological, and sociological (the social influences in question being material, political, religious, domestic, or educational), and lastly, when it reaches the domain of art itself, truly aesthetic or technical.<sup>1</sup>

The method of a scientific aesthetic should be that originally introduced by Fechner, positive, empirical, and historical, working always "from below upwards". It would pass, like the other sciences, through three successive methodological stages: a preliminary inspection of all the facts, the establishment of a number of provisional hypotheses by induction, and a deductive verification of these which would transform them, if successful, into laws. Metaphysical speculation should not be banished altogether from aesthetics, but its proper place is after and according to, "après et d'après", experience.<sup>2</sup>

But, it may be asked, does not an aesthetic which narrows its field of investigation to the domain of art exclude quite unjustifiably the whole of natural beauty? No; for nature alone, in her impassable serenity, nature without humanity, is neither beautiful nor ugly, but simply anaesthetic; she first acquires definite aesthetic value, the "pseudo-aesthetic" beauty selected and embellished by man, when seen through the medium of art. Art alone possesses a truly and properly "aesthetic" beauty.<sup>3</sup>

The most characteristic feature of art itself is technique, "la technique", in the wide sense of the word, in the sense that includes, as well as the orthodox and traditional technique of the individual arts, its improvement and modification in the hands of the original artist; such is

<sup>1</sup> See Lalo: *Introduction à l'Esthétique*, pp. i-ix, 47, 119, 156, 157, 338, 339; *Esthétique*, pp. 9, 10, 73-89; *Les Sentiments Esthétiques*, pp. 1-17.

<sup>2</sup> *Introduction à l'Esthétique*, pp. 1-47.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 63-137; *Esthétique*, pp. 4-9.

the essence of art and the only veritable "aesthetic" beauty.<sup>1</sup>

Hence it is—contrary to the indiscriminating hedonism of Fechner—that aesthetic pleasure is a very special kind of enjoyment, being born of the satisfaction of a technical exigency organized and disciplined by society; and satisfactions of any other order, sensuous pleasure, intellectual facility, or moral performance, are always aesthetically indifferent.<sup>2</sup>

Hence also the only properly aesthetic emotions are technical emotions, "les sentiments techniques", the feelings of play, technical superiority, or harmony, produced by an appreciation of the peculiar technique of the art in question, and all other emotions which may be experienced, such as *Einfühlung*, are in themselves wholly anaesthetic, no more than an accompaniment or a consequence of the apprehension of beauty and not by any means the essential phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

Now art, like science and right conduct, represents a human value, a form of the planned and voluntary organization of life. But all values, aesthetic, moral, or scientific, are alike imperative or normative, as they prescribe definite rules and injunctions for the applied science which corresponds to them; thus in aesthetics we have, on the one hand, purely theoretical and speculative knowledge, mathematical, physiological, psychological, historical, and, on the other hand, applied knowledge, visible in the teaching and instruction of art, and lastly, we have normative knowledge which furnishes precepts and criteria for the judgment of works of art and becomes, in relation to the individual art, literary, musical, or art

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à l'Esthétique*, pp. 138–145; *Esthétique*, pp. 84–89; *Esquisse d'une Esthétique musicale Scientifique*, p. 37; *Les Sentiments Esthétiques*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Esthétique Expérimentale Contemporaine*, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> *Les Sentiments Esthétiques*, p. 99, 143–238.

criticism. Further, as nothing possesses value save in relation to ourselves or to other things, the vulgar superstition of "absolute values" is a *contradictio in adjecto*; all values are essentially relative.

This "relative dogmatism", which acknowledges the dependence of art forms on the changing conditions of existence, and, at the same time, asserts the legislative right of aesthetic science, avoids both the anarchic impressionism of Anatole France and the desuete dogmatism of Brunetière. Now there are two distinct varieties of value, the "normal" and the "ideal" value, the former representing the true, the good, and the beautiful, in so far as they are actually recognized and acknowledged at the moment, the latter being a hypothesis of a future state of beauty, goodness, and truth, to be achieved in the normal course of evolution. So if popular taste is mediocre in the extreme, and the artistic genius unrecognized by his contemporaries, we are to console ourselves by looking forward to the gradual amelioration of taste and the ultimate acknowledgment of genius.<sup>1</sup>

The author has applied this general conception of aesthetics and of art in several detailed studies, and one of these is a highly original investigation of the historical relations between art and society; it undertakes an examination of the social conditions, in themselves quite anaesthetic, of the artistic activity, a necessary, but not by any means a sufficient condition, of the life and development of art.

Organized and collective labour, which, in civilized societies, takes the form of trades and professions, frequently exercised a very considerable influence; this is specially evident among primitive and uncultured peoples,

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à l'Esthétique*, pp. 159-166, 315-339; *Esthétique*, pp. 20-33; *l'Art et la Vie Sociale*, pp. 350-352; *Esquisse d'une Esthétique musicale Scientifique*, pp. 33-35; *l'Art et la Morale*, pp. 115-148, 177-179.

where the rhythm of work has left its indelible stamp on music and poetry as we see in the songs of sowing, harvest, or vintage, and the boatmen's barcaroles. The division of labour in the economic sphere, though its effects have not been entirely favourable to art, secured at any rate the autonomy of the artist in respect of both secular and spiritual institutions. The economic reward offered to the artist, while not affecting the quality of his work, has certainly played a part in deciding the nature and the quantity of his total output. The influence of luxuries, such as comforts, sport, collecting, fashions, has been principally negative; in civilized societies they have to a large extent usurped the place of art, which, since it follows and presupposes the satisfaction of our most urgent material needs, is itself a rival luxury. The effect of the family—matriarchal, patriarchal, or modern and individualistic—has proved both direct and indirect; for works of art have either reflected the actual organization of the family group, or, as in contemporary erotic literature, they have provided the outlet urgently required by our drastic social discipline of the sexual instinct.

Political influence from within a nation has been chiefly negative, rulers and governments having limited or prevented the spontaneous development of the arts; but a positive effect is also apparent, for democracy, aristocracy, monarchy, centralized and decentralized administration, have all left their indelible stamp. The most outstanding of these political forces, however, has been international rather than national, from without and not from within, being the pressure exerted by the indigenous artistic culture of alien peoples, an influence peculiarly efficacious whenever the incoming exotic art has been independent of a foreign tongue.

Another very important external agency has been war. Its power in this respect has resided primarily in the

establishment of communications between alien peoples and alien cultures, in itself a quite indirect fashion of affecting art; not that cultural hegemony is by any means always the fruit of victory in the field, for, though the supremacy of Louis XIV was both political and intellectual, the art of Greece vanquished the victorious Romans and Italy ruled in the hearts of her French and Spanish conquerors. War has been directly responsible for real artistic achievement only among primitive peoples; for militarism has played a minor rôle in the artistic production of civilized nations, and one, naturally enough, more significant during the prosperous and oblivious periods of peace than in the agony of actual belligerence.

Religion, though never identical with art, has exercised a profound and pervasive influence on its development, an influence both positive and negative. The latter effect has been, historically, the more important of the two. Acting as a rigid conservative agency, organized religion has stifled the initiative and originality of artists, prohibited the invention of heretical art forms, and even destroyed, in the mad frenzy of iconoclastic fanaticism, the priceless treasures of a bygone age. Though its positive effects have been most appreciable among primitive peoples, where they centre round the representation of the totem animal and the appropriate ceremonial rites, they are also visible in the constant and continuous influence on art of the great organized cults of civilization.<sup>1</sup>

The aesthetic investigations of the chairman of the British Institute of Industrial Art are essentially sociological; he traces in them the all-pervasive influence of external and social forces on the development of art as a whole, with special reference to the growth of common or applied art.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Art et la Vie Sociale.*

A work of industrial art may be defined as a product of human labour, exhibiting unity of conception, fulfilling a useful function by means well suited both to its purpose and to the process of its production, and possessing the quality of beauty.<sup>1</sup> "Art value"—as distinct from "market value"—includes therefore, as well as beauty of colour, texture, and form, and harmonious unity of design, conformity to the purpose which the object is destined to serve and loyal obedience to the limiting conditions imposed by the raw material and other technical factors in production.

Social pressure may be observed in the stamp of a national religion and of the art cultures of foreign nations, as well as in the practice of a traditional artistic technique, but the properly and narrowly economic condition of art production resides in the adaptation of production costs, in terms of effort and materials, to the degree of importance, dignity, and nobility of the ends which the work is to serve, and to the level of well-being or purchasing power of those persons for whose use it is intended; herein lies what may be termed "the economic fitness" of a work of art.<sup>2</sup>

The practical corollaries of this discovery are of overwhelming importance. For whether the industrial art of a modern nation will remain, like the minor arts of the past, a pure luxury and monopoly of the privileged few, or whether it can become, infected by the new ideals and the new spirit of democracy, and encouraged by the shining example of the Swedes, "a national service ministering to the everyday needs of mankind", will be decided, to a very great extent, by the extravagance or parsimony of those who produce it. In our own country a permanent resuscitation of common or applied art

<sup>1</sup> Sir Herbert Llewellyn Smith: *The Economic Laws of Art Production*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133; *The Place of Economy in Art*, pp. 6, 7.

depends entirely on a reformation of the intensely specialized methods of modern industrial production along these lines, and on a simultaneous spread of education, specially secondary, so as to raise the general level of taste and appreciation; thus only, and neither by a return to the artist craftsman, utterly impracticable in the modern world, nor by the slavish imitation of extinct styles, can the breach which the Industrial Revolution created in the artistic traditions of our minor arts be finally healed.<sup>1</sup>

H. A. Needham, in his history of modern sociological aesthetic in France and England, claims that aesthetics consist of three distinct and complementary parts: the first, abstract or metaphysical, endeavours to define the Beautiful; the second, psychological, endeavours to describe the effect of beauty on the human soul; the third, which is sociological, aims at determining the place of beauty in life and the part it plays in the social activities of man. The immense difficulties presented by the two former tasks leave to the sociological aesthetic the place of honour in this department of philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Economic Laws of Art Production*, pp. 225-235.

<sup>2</sup> H. A. Needham: *Le développement de l'Esthétique Sociologique en France et en Angleterre au 19me siècle*. Introduction, pp. 2, 3.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE THEORY OF FORM

ALTHOUGH the Kantian aesthetic is by no means consistent in its attitude to beauty, at one moment at least it appears definitely formalistic. The judgment of taste, being determined by the mere feeling of the free play between our cognitive faculties, excludes as a possible determinant all concepts or universals, and so makes the utility or perfection of an object quite irrelevant to its artistic value. This leaves its form as the sole source of aesthetic satisfaction. "In the case of an object whose form, in the mere reflection upon it (without reference to any concept to be obtained by it), is judged as the ground of a pleasure in the representation of such an object . . . the object is then called beautiful."<sup>1</sup> Hence the distinction between "free" and "dependent" beauty, the latter presupposing the concept of what the object is intended to represent, such as the human figure, the former presupposing no such concept at all; hence, also, the emphasis on delineation as the essential feature of the plastic arts, by which is meant not what gratifies in sensation, such as colour, but that which pleases by means of its bare form, the treatment of music as a play of sensations in time, and the ascription of true and non-sensuous beauty to "pure" colours and tones.<sup>2</sup>

A contemporary champion of formalism is the young French philosopher, E. Souriau. His essay on the future of aesthetics is primarily an epistemological enquiry, an investigation into the nature of knowledge, and, in particular, into the status of form, "la forme", and only incidentally an excursion into that branch of philosophy

<sup>1</sup> Kant: *Critique of Judgement*, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-84.



with which we are concerned. We are not interested here in the value of his epistemological realism, but only in his attitude to aesthetics and to the beautiful.

Now, in the first place, what is aesthetics? It is the study of forms under the category of universality, the science of forms, "la science des formes";<sup>1</sup> this distinguishes it immediately from the natural sciences, which are always etiological, being concerned with explanation and laws, not with the mere appearance of things in perception. The four separate branches of aesthetics, based on the different objects with which they deal, are pythagorean aesthetic, dynamic aesthetic, skeuological aesthetic, and psycho-aesthetic. Pythagorean aesthetic handles those ideal mathematical forms to which real spatial forms cannot correspond, such as elementary designs in decorative art, geometrical figures, and arithmetical proportions; dynamic aesthetic deals with successive forms, with forms as they unfold themselves *sub specie temporis*, such as instrumental music, song, and dance; skeuological aesthetic deals with the forms of natural and fabricated objects, be they artificial, organic, or inorganic; and psycho-aesthetic deals with form in the realm of mind, with conscious states independent of their psychological explanation.<sup>2</sup>

Now, as one of the principal features of all science is that its abstract speculations support concrete work, scientific aesthetic is a theoretical activity of such a kind that art is its specific practice; art is in fact the conscious application of specialized knowledge, and it stands in the same relation to aesthetics as medicine to physiology, as surveying to geometry, or as engineering to chemistry and physics.<sup>3</sup>

But what is art in itself? It is, above all, a fabrication

<sup>1</sup> E. Souriau: *L'Avenir de l'Esthétique*, pp. 9, 180, 181, 388.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-387.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

of a certain order, a tendency to create things for their own sake, in the division of social labour it is the skeupoetic function, "la fonction skeuo-poétique".<sup>1</sup> This distinguishes it at once from science and morality, which construct nothing material, and also from economic production, the artist being concerned with the intrinsic qualities of his material, the artisan—unless his work rises to the level of art—only with its extrinsic qualities, with its value in relation to some utilitarian purpose. The arts are naturally divided into two groups, representative and non-representative; thus we find that in music, architecture, and the minor arts, the object is fabricated in accordance with the dictates of its intrinsic form, its material, while in poetry, sculpture, and painting the artist is influenced, not only by the intrinsic form of his raw materials, but also by their extrinsic form, by the subject they are intended to represent.<sup>2</sup>

There is a strong formalist tendency to be found in modern art and among modern art critics. In a theory of visual art written under the influence of Post-Impressionism, Clive Bell has urged that the value of the work of art resides, not in its emotional or intellectual content, but in those relations of line, colour, or volume, which constitute what he calls "significant form".<sup>3</sup>

This opinion is endorsed by his more eminent fellow-critic, Roger Fry. He considers form to be the most essential feature in the graphic arts, an arrangement of line and colour which combines both "order" and "variety". He believes the outstanding characteristic of the modern movement in painting to be, as opposed to the pictorial realism of the nineteenth century, "the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and

<sup>1</sup> E. Souriau: *L'Avenir de l'Esthétique*, pp. 156-157, 167.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167-177.

<sup>3</sup> Clive Bell: *Art*, p. 8.

harmony".<sup>1</sup> He maintains that dramatic representation in painting is the unwarranted intrusion of an alien art, the art of literature; for painting itself is an art of plastic volumes and pure design.<sup>2</sup>

The vision of the artist is distinct from that of the scientist and the ordinary man because it is "more detached from the passions of the instinctive life", and so more disinterested than either practical or curiosity vision.<sup>3</sup>

A lesser, but still an important, luminary in the region of art criticism defines beauty as "a unity of formal relations among our sense perceptions",<sup>4</sup> and art, the narrower concept of the two, as "an attempt to create pleasing forms".<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Roger Fry: *Vision and Design*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Transformations*, pp. 1-43.

<sup>3</sup> *Vision and Design*, pp. 47-54.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Read: *The Meaning of Art*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

PART II

CRITICAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE



## SUBJECTIVE THEORIES

## I. THE THEORY OF EXPRESSION

The leading German aestheticians are unanimously hostile to Croce's expressionism. Dessoir writes as follows in a critical review of a translated version of the *Estetica*: "When I reviewed Croce's minor works in these pages, I accorded his essays unreserved praise, but I am unfortunately compelled to deny his value as an historian and a systematic thinker."<sup>1</sup> The tone of Volkelt is even more severe. "He [i.e. Croce] works invariably with inexact, ambiguous, and unanalysed concepts. The psychological ground on which he moves is of an obscurity that one meets but rarely. He shows a striking blindness to all delicate problems." And finally, the identification of aesthetics and linguistic is a "curiosity" of philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

We are concerned here only with Croce's claim to have made a substantial contribution to aesthetics, and not with the relation of his work on this subject to the philosophical system to which it belongs.

The identification of aesthetics and philology or linguistic rests on a complete confusion between the real objects of these sciences; philology, certainly, studies the syntax, the derivation, and the history of words, but how can the richness and variety of aesthetic experience be confined to or equated with language in the ordinary sense? Besides, if all utterance is artistic, then every man, as soon as he has learnt the use of his tongue, with the

<sup>1</sup> Dessoir: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. XXVI, Hft. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. III, pp. 378-390.

first words that emerge from the incoherent babble of infancy, is *ipso facto* a poet. But this error is so gross and palpable that even a child could perceive it.

Beauty, we are told, is "intuition", the immediate apprehension of the image. So we are really to believe that at almost every moment of our waking lives and in the dreams of sleep, in all perception or imagined perception whatever we are in direct contact with the beautiful! And if "intuition" is really "lyricism", the artistic representation of emotion and passion, it cannot also be the perceptual stage in the cognitive process; there is here a striking and unmistakable contradiction. Following Croce's intransigent subjectivism a step further, we find that "intuition" and "expression" are exactly the same. But to ignore the difference between a "vision" or "intuition" and its external "expression" in a work of art is to deny the significance of a specific material to the creative activity of the artist. Now the true artist always endeavours to realize the peculiar vices and virtues inherent in his medium. For instance, the student of singing soon finds that the masters of the German Lied and the Italian Opera understood the human voice far better than Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner, composers who tower above them in sheer musical genius. It is, besides, a commonplace for musicians that every instrument has a voice and soul of its own. And further, is not the term "expression" far too hospitable and comprehensive for the narrow limits of the aesthetic experience? The spontaneous and involuntary expression of fear or anger, of grief or delight, or of any other violent emotion, is surely in itself neither beautiful nor artistic, and even the more controlled and deliberate expression of the emotions in social intercourse is an art only in the sense of the diplomat or the social climber. Croce's whole psychology, his division of the mind into a number of

hermetically sealed compartments, is entirely mythological, a belated survival of the old "faculty" doctrine.

Whatever merit his work may possess lies, not in his general theory, which must be regarded, in spite of its world-wide reputation, as one of the aberrations of philosophy, but in the comprehensive history of aesthetics that accompanies it; in spite of such manifest errors as the dismissal of Lipps and Volkelt in a few paragraphs, and the failure to mention Dessoir at all, not to mention the frequency of dogmatic assertions for which no arguments are advanced, the history of speculation on this subject in Italy is of considerable interest, especially to students in our own country.

The historical sketch, which comprises the bulk of Carritt's little book, is too brief to be anything but cursory. The identification of beauty and the expression of emotion, even if it be a refinement by delimitation on the theory of Croce, seems to forget that the crude emotions of ordinary life are wholly foreign to the experience of beauty, and, moreover, to conflict with the author's own vindication of contemplativeness as an essential and characteristic feature of this experience. It may be that the author, seduced by Pater's belief that literature is the better part of aesthetics, has aimed at stylistic brilliance rather than the patient and sober analysis of science; in this purpose he has certainly succeeded.

Having carefully scanned the pages of Collingwood's works for a definite philosophy of art, one is rewarded for one's pains by an imposing array of perfect tautologies,—art, play, imagination, and beauty. The author seems blissfully unaware of the explosion of the Spencerian play theory, and he quietly ignores the existence of imagination in science, myth, and philosophy, in the reverie and the nightmare, as though it were in fact the exclusive



monopoly of the artist. His treatment of the great problems of aesthetics is superficial in the extreme.

While stimulating and encouraging the fundamental philosophical interest in aesthetics, the revival by Gentile of the pre-scientific approach to its problems is a methodological atavism and an arbitrary sweeping aside of all the fruits of exact psychological and objective research that have been garnered so patiently in modern times. His conclusions in the sphere of empirical aesthetics are manifestly worthless; for to identify art with "feeling", or even with "pleasure", is to outstrip the hedonists in their wildest dreams, and to rob the term of any real meaning by extending it so far beyond its legitimate connotation. It seems almost incredible that anyone can seriously believe all emotion or all enjoyment, whatever the circumstances and the occasion, to be nothing more nor less than a work of art!

## 2. THE THEORY OF PLEASURE

The divers representatives of the Hedonist school, a large and important branch of psychological aesthetics, maintain in common that a special brand or variety of pleasure is the constant and characteristic feature of the experience of beauty. This view we shall definitely challenge.

In the first place, pleasure is qualitatively the same in an act of bestial cruelty, in the delights of the palate or in frivolous games, as it is in a moment of mystical ecstasy, in the audition of a magnificent opera, or in an action of supreme heroism and abnegation of self, and for this reason it cannot possibly serve to demarcate one type of human experience from another; what differs fundamentally in each case, making of a man a hero or a beast, is, not the naked feeling itself, the bare and unadorned sense of pleasure, but the internal and external causes,

conditions, and concomitants of the feeling in question. These have become, in the course of the evolutionary transition from barbarism to culture, from the animal to the purely human, gradually further and further removed from the natural biological interests of man, until, finally, delight in the symbols and abstract notions of science and mathematics, in the performance of duty, and in the contemplative and impersonal attitude to art and nature, has installed itself as a normal event in the lives of truly civilized beings. Vain must be the search for criteria specific to the sphere of beauty until it is realized that pleasure is only the result and consequence of the successive moments of an aesthetic experience, a continuous subjective accompaniment of the creative activity or the contemplative attitude, rather than the essential ingredient of the aesthetic process itself.

We would urge besides, as our second objection, that our experience in the sphere of beauty is not a witness to enjoyment unalloyed, and that certain outstanding aesthetic categories, such as the tragic, the ugly, and sometimes even the sublime, contain as an essential and indispensable factor an element of discomfort and even of pain. Who has not endured the crüellest agonies at the performance of some great tragedy by Shakespeare, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, or Hauptmann, or in the reading of an intensely sombre and tragic novel by Hardy or Dostoievski, who has not been at once fascinated and repelled by a superb caricature of Daumier, by a mean and brutal character in Zola or de Maupassant, by a painted demi-mondaine of Toulouse-Lautrec, or a drunken peasant of Teniers, who has not felt a fleeting shudder, as though his own life were in peril, in face of a terrific thunderstorm by sea or land, a mighty conflagration, or the appalling, solitary, and majestic grandeur of an Alpine peak?

But if, on these grounds, we must reject the claim of

the Hedonists to have found in pleasure the badge and the mark of the experience of beauty, we accept gratefully their original contribution to the general psychology of artistic creation and appreciation. For enjoyment, the most natural and universal product of our experience in these spheres, never withdraws entirely from the aesthetic consciousness; it is, in fact, in the ascendant always, even when, as is so frequently the case, the feeling of delight is mingled with a sense of distress, oppression, and even of pain. Furthermore, as Porena and Santayana have justly observed, there is an unmistakable tendency to project and objectify the subjective feeling of pleasure, to attribute it to the object instead of to ourselves. Nevertheless, the ascription of purely mental and subjective states to solid external objects is not confined to the experience of beauty; as we have already tried to urge, it is always the sources of this enjoyment that raise it above the common level and not the bare feeling itself or the manner in which it makes us the victims of illusion.

Now the main sources from which delight of this kind is derived are, clearly enough, the higher senses and the sense of smell when divorced from practical and biological functions; artistic sympathy, which may, as in the case of the tragic and the ugly, involve in itself acute suffering, and is always an emotion entirely distinct from the feeling of pleasure or pain it produces; perception of the formal relations between the separate parts of material objects, and lastly, recognition of some lofty value, such as truth, holiness, or goodness, incorporated in the subject and intellectual content of the object of contemplation. The real feelings which result from the operation of all these separate causes fuse immediately, thus irradiating and suffusing the whole aesthetic consciousness with a sense of exquisite harmony and purest delight.

It need hardly be added that pleasure issuing from other

sources, such as the private associations of the spectator with his own past, though it is often regarded by the uninstructed as genuine enjoyment of the beautiful, is no more relevant to this domain than the crude satisfaction afforded by vigorous exercise or a hearty meal.

We shall, of course, assume that the general criticism of aesthetic hedonism applies to the views of its individual supporters, and only criticize them in so far as their opinions call for further remark.

The physiological hypothesis advanced by the American psychologist, H. R. Marshall, in explanation of feeling, though it would appear to hold in the case of the pleasures and pains of the body, has not at present been verified in the case of mental suffering and enjoyment; in the sphere of mind the satisfaction or disappointment of impulse and tendency is clearly indicated as the immediate cause of pleasure and pain. But, as the greater part of aesthetic enjoyment is undoubtedly mental in origin, a purely physiological hypothesis can hardly hope to cover the whole field. Besides, though duration may serve to distinguish the pleasures of the lower from those of the higher senses, it fails palpably to discriminate between delight in beauty and other varieties of joy; success in love or in a chosen career, the inheritance of a large fortune, these are by no means fleeting or transitory joys for those who achieve them.

There is no real evidence for the existence of a simple, unique, artistic impulse, an art instinct, be it the outgrowth of a constructive instinct, originally practical, or the impulse to attract by pleasing; the specificity of artistic creation is due rather to the original combination and co-operation of a number of mental ingredients ordinarily engaged in other duties. And lastly, to urge that the function of art lies in the promotion of social solidarity and cohesion, is to ignore that its latest and

loftiest achievements are, and seem likely ever to remain, caviare to the general, being accessible, in all their originality and splendour, only to a small élite of connoisseurs and professional artists.

Santayana shows considerable psychological insight, which he conveys with the poetic splendour of a literary style now acknowledged as among the crowning achievements of English prose; he recognizes the paradoxical projection of pleasure in aesthetic experience, but he fails to assign to this phenomenon its rightful place.

It is generally acknowledged that Guyau's definition of beauty, which would include all the pleasures of the senses, practical as well as disinterested, is far too comprehensive, and that the whole picture of aesthetic experience it conjures up is a mere travesty of the real thing. The insistence in his later work on the supreme significance of sympathetic emotion is a distinct advance; but the impression left on one by his writings on our subject is primarily that of contact with a deeply sensitive and poetic nature.

The physiological hypothesis in regard to the explanation of feeling used by Grant Allen is open to the same objection as that of Marshall. The importance of his contribution to aesthetics lies in the brilliant account of enjoyment of beauty at the level of sensation, and in the admirable criterion he provides to distinguish such enjoyment from ordinary physical pleasures.

Sully's merit as an aesthetician would have been greater had he been able to move as freely in the sphere of art as in that of mind. His psychological study of aesthetic experience is without a rival in the work of English philosophers, even if, as compared with the investigations of German aestheticians, it lacks the penetration and the detail which would make it, at this moment, more than an introduction to the subject.

### 3. THE THEORY OF PLAY

The popular view, voiced in recent years by H. Spencer, K. Groos, and K. Lange, that aesthetic experience is a form and variety of play, rests on a confusion between partial resemblance and complete identity, due to inadequate understanding of the real nature of both these activities. We now realize that the sport of animals and small children is by no means a mere release of superfluous energy, being as a rule propaedeutic in function, a purely instinctive preparation for the most arduous tasks of maturity. This leaves us with the useless and imaginative games of children, their pure recreation, and the play of adults in so far as it represents a relaxation from work and not a kind of physical hygiene, as akin to art by reason of their direction of human energy into channels that lead to no practical or biological goal. Surplus energy, energy not employed in the direct maintenance of life, is in truth a necessary if not a sufficient condition for the existence and development of art and the higher culture; only in those civilized nations where a certain proportion of the population has been released from economic thralldom do we find the complexity, the high degree of differentiation, the sublime emancipation from practical aims, nowhere apparent in the crude and elementary artistic life of primitive peoples.

But at this point the analogy abruptly ends. For the artist is necessarily a fabricator of real objects, a man who leaves the stamp of his imagination on material things, whereas the player constructs nothing at all, he simply dissipates his energy in the act of play; even his enjoyment cannot be properly termed artistic, for though it may be the disinterested fruit of indulgence in a pure luxury, it is derived, not from an object that delights the senses, or arouses our imaginative sympathy, or presents an har-

monious pattern to the eye or ear, but from the muscular or mental exertion of the practical self. Nor should it ever be forgotten that, whereas the player is supremely indifferent to the brute things he uses for his pastime, the artist regards his materials with the eye and the understanding of a lover.

These very outstanding differences between the artistic and the play activities, which reveal the absence from play of any permanent constructiveness or truly aesthetic enjoyment, should suffice to refute the thesis of perfect identity and to prevent confusion of this kind in days to come. But if further evidence is required, it is amply provided by Dessoir's investigations in regard to the innate propensities of great artists in their youth. One would naturally suppose, if art and play were really closely allied, that the artistic genius should manifest in childhood a marked taste and inclination for sport; it appears, however, that not only does he indulge in play no more than the normal child, but even, in many cases, that he neglects his games for a precocious apprenticeship to the calling in which he is destined to excel.<sup>1</sup>

And finally, the two are widely separated by their relative significance in the system of values; for whereas art and beauty, being one of the supreme ends of human existence, possess intrinsic value, recreation and play, which administer to the well-being of the body, which, in turn, is simply an instrument for the realization of the higher life, have in themselves no more than extrinsic and derivative value. The English idolization of sport is an aberration of the popular mind quite alien to the cultured outlook, and even to the popular view in countries other than our own.

<sup>1</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 299-300.

#### 4. THE THEORIES OF APPEARANCE AND ILLUSION

It is easy to confuse the theories of appearance and those of deception or illusion owing to the ambiguity of a word constantly employed in German philosophy, namely the expression "Schein"; now the usual, and, to our mind, the legitimate connotation of this term is appearance rather than absolute illusion.

In the appreciation of beauty we inhabit, not the abstract and verbal world of thought, but a world of unique individuals and unique material things, perceived directly or imaginatively, and opened to us through the several channels of sense; we do not, like the scientist, dissect and analyse the physical realm until it is transformed into a fleshless skeleton of chemical elements and ultra-microscopic entities, nor do we, like the psychologist, deal directly with the phenomena of mind, for we are content to delight ourselves with the beautiful image of the sea, and the sky, and the fair face of the earth, to immerse ourselves in the mere appearance of things as contrasted with their substantial reality. Such is the kernel of truth in the theory of appearance as it is advanced by Schiller or von Hartmann.

This trait, however, cannot be regarded as an ultimate feature of man's aesthetic experience because, as Volkelt has already observed, the disinterestedness of the artistic spirit, its complete emancipation from all practical or intellectual preoccupations, immediately transforms the external world into a world of appearance, into a pure spectacle of which the scene and the players are the sober realities of ordinary life. A transformation of this kind should therefore be regarded as a consequence and a corollary of genuine aesthetic detachment, and not as an aspect of the realm of beauty stubbornly resistant to analytic thought.



Volckelt, in his most recent pronouncements on the theory of illusion, "Täuschung", "Illusion", rejects uncompromisingly from the aesthetic sphere any and every form of psychological illusion; he will allow neither ordinary illusions of perception or sensation, such as occur in normal experience and are familiar to the professional psychologist, nor the wavering illusion, "schwebende Illusion", the active conflict between the critical and the naïve consciousness, in which F. T. Vischer, K. Lange, and he himself at an earlier period in his development, had believed, to constitute a real and significant feature of the creation or contemplation of the beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

This attitude does not appear to us to do full justice to the considered opinion of the many aestheticians who have embraced the hypothesis in question. While rejecting illusion of the normal psychological order, and a wavering or oscillation between the illusory and the real, as equally untrue to the unsophisticated aesthetic consciousness, it seems undeniable, when we reflect on our experience of natural or artistic beauty, that we find ourselves to have been momentarily the victims of a delicious and unique illusion.

For when we attribute tenderness to musical tones, or despair to a sculpted figure of Michelangelo, or hilarity to the babbling brook, or fury to the waves of a storm-tossed sea, there can be little doubt, on looking back, that the habitat of these emotions was in reality our own sensitive spirit and not the inanimate and unconscious objects to which they were ascribed. The artistic illusion differs fundamentally, however, from ordinary perceptual illusions because it is voluntary and deliberate, and so not beyond the sphere of conscious control, being begun,

<sup>1</sup> J. Volckelt: *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 149-191; *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. 14.

enjoyed as long as it endures, and finally terminated, at the fiat and instigation of an individual will.

But illusion can show no better title than appearance to be regarded as an ultimate and irreducible feature of our experience of beauty; for it follows from the very nature of artistic sympathy that, in perfect awareness of what we are doing, we set out to deceive ourselves and to court that heavenly illusion without which human life would no longer be completely human.

The hypothesis of K. Lange is an interesting example of how experience can be travestied in the interests of a preconceived theory. For when we are truly immersed in the contemplation of a work of art our critical faculty is asleep; so long as we vibrate to a musical composition or a lyrical poem we lend ourselves without reserve to an animistic illusion, there is no wavering between the illusory belief and our knowledge of what musical tones and written words are in reality, far less an oscillation between mere representations of the one and the other; the critical faculty awakens after the aesthetic experience itself is over and past, and then only do we discriminate between the apparent and the real. The author is, besides, another victim of the common error which confounds art and play.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

To general psychology Freud has made the most significant contribution of recent years; but can it be said that he and his school have added anything really substantial to our understanding of art and its appreciation? When one has patiently and carefully unravelled the detailed Freudian analyses of myths, and poems, and stories, and novels, and paintings, one rises from this long labour feeling at once disgusted by the wholesale distortion

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*, p. 28.

of facts<sup>1</sup> in the interests of a preconceived theory, and delighted by the promise and the performance of the psychoanalytic method in a small but genuine tract of experience; the vice of the psychoanalytic aesthetic is precisely the same as that of the entire Freudian psychology, the exaggeration of a true principle<sup>2</sup> to a degree that verges on absolute erotomania, its shining merit a humble but scientific contribution to our understanding of art forms and the delight they afford.

The sexual instinct, being more stubbornly repressed by the legal and social structure of civilization than any of the other primary human instincts, has elaborated more complex and more indirect channels of self-expression. But the "sex appeal" of the second-rate film, of the cabaret and the music-hall stage, of the pornographic post card or novel, is altogether too practical and too near to the real satisfaction of biological needs to be counted in the sphere of the beautiful; only when the satisfaction of sexual desire, and of the wonderful emotions with which it is so closely and inextricably woven, is purely ideal, when we share by the power of our imaginative sympathy the immortal rapture of a Tristan and an Isolde, the joy and anguish of a Romeo and a Juliet, or the tragic passion of an Oedipus, a Manfred, or a Cenci, when we taste the marvellous tenderness, and the marvellous sweetness, and all the bitterness of love, without ourselves falling a victim of the dread goddess Aphrodite, only then may we worship, purified and ennobled, before the sacred throne of beauty.

<sup>1</sup> O. Rank regards Caesar as the symbol of Brutus' father, Richard III's remorse as due to his incestuous cravings, the devotion of Antigone to Polyneices and of Orestes to Iphigenia as having a purely sexual origin. Freud himself weaves a psychoanalytic myth round the life of Leonardo da Vinci.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dessoir: *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, Bd. X, Hft. 2.

Thus it appears that the sexual life of man, when it reaches the domain of art, is suddenly transmuted into imaginative or artistic sympathy; though in face of art we may often gratify, as the Freudians tell us, the stifled and forbidden desires of ordinary life, this gratification, in so far as it can be called noble and beautiful, is not real but fictitious, a creation of imaginary beings who embody the powerful sexual cravings and emotions that are repressed in the course of our daily routine, or a participation, by means of imaginative sympathy, in the life and experience of the fascinating puppets of the artistic fancy. But it should never be forgotten that, our sexual nature being only one facet, however large and significant, of human personality as a whole, the ideal satisfaction of the huge bundle of tendencies and emotions, normal and abnormal, that together compose it, can only be one variety of the far wider and more universal phenomenon of artistic sympathy.

## 6. THE EXPERIMENTAL THEORY

Can the surest and most modern of scientific methods, by means of which the conditions of an event are deliberately varied and controlled, a method admirably suited to the investigation of the material world by chemists and physicists and gaining ground rapidly in the realm of living organisms, be employed with equal success to elucidate so fragile and evanescent a flower of the mind as beauty?

The answer of the leading modern aestheticians is unmistakably in the negative. Dessoir warns the philosopher against substituting experiment for the use of personal introspection and of introspective observations culled from others; there is not merely a quantitative but even a qualitative difference between simple and com-

plex aesthetic processes and reactions.<sup>1</sup> Volkelt is equally sceptical about the scope of experimental enquiry in aesthetics; he urges that, as the experience of the subject is likely to be disturbed by the atmosphere of a laboratory and by the intention of the experimenter, and as his response is determined by his entire personality, by his innate disposition, his culture, his state of mind at the moment, only problems of a simple and elementary nature may be solved successfully in this manner; while even then, as the appreciation of simple colours and forms does not rise to *Einfühlung*, such problems are properly speaking "pre-aesthetic".<sup>2</sup> Külpe himself admits that, owing to the intervention of associations, no exact method has been hitherto devised for examining the indirect factor in aesthetic appreciation.<sup>3</sup>

We, also, would erase the appreciation of complex objects and, yet more rigorously, the creation of works of art, from the programme of experimental psychology, on the ground that the necessary and inevitable conditions of experimental enquiry, the paraphernalia and questioning it entails, whether in the laboratory, the school, or the home, seriously alter the character of the experience itself. We cannot even admit that the most elementary kind of aesthetic enjoyment, the appreciation of simple colours and forms, can be tested adequately in this manner, owing to the intervention of the many associations they arouse spontaneously in the mature mind; at the same time, this unwelcome intruder can be avoided in the case of small children, and here experiment has achieved—as we find in the conclusions of Valentine and Lascaris—a measure of success which we may hope to see increased in the future.

<sup>1</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 39–41, 364.

<sup>3</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, p. 58.

The experimental method having been relegated to this humble but useful sphere, it is possible for the psychological aesthetician to settle down to his proper task of collecting the data for his investigations; these are supplied by reflection on his own experience and observation as an artist and a lover of art and nature, and, perhaps to a lesser degree, by the information he is able to glean from artists and amateurs about their personal creativeness and appreciativeness in this sphere. The primary method of aesthetics, its essential instrument of investigation, has been hitherto, and seems likely to remain in the future, introspective rather than experimental.

The cardinal defect of Fechner's propaedeutic is that it formulates thirteen laws, such as the principles of the aesthetic threshold and minimum effort, which apply to the affective life as a whole, and so fails to distinguish the specifically aesthetic from the larger and wider sphere of feeling; it belongs, therefore, to general psychology rather than aesthetics. Another important flaw is the failure, with Lotze and Siebeck, to discriminate between association in general and the peculiar brand of fused association which appears to operate in the experience of the beautiful. From a logical standpoint little satisfaction is afforded by the spectacle of thirteen separate laws, and it would have required, one would have thought, little real effort on the part of the author to reduce their number.

But, nevertheless, the "Vorschule" marks one of the great turning-points in the history of aesthetics, comparable to its attainment, towards the close of the eighteenth century, of an individual and independent existence in the hands of Baumgarten and of his more famous successor, Kant. Henceforward the ruling methods of this philosophical discipline were to be the methods of the natural and psychological sciences, the route "from

below", the analysis of experience shared by all, in place of the *a priori*, metaphysical deduction, which reigned during the first half of the century, and which turned aesthetics into another field for the personal predilections of individual philosophers. The greatness of Fechner lies rather in the definitive establishment of the empirical method than in the bold application of experimental psychology to the special problems of aesthetics; the path which he opened has since been persistently followed. His contribution to the psychology of feeling is indirectly of no little importance; for, in view of the immense part played by pleasure in the experience of beauty, the science of which it is the object presupposes acquaintance with the general laws that govern our affective life.

For reasons we have already given, we put more faith in the results of Valentine's colour experiments with small children than in those of his experiments with adults or when he uses large and complex objects. Herein lies the principal interest of his little work. A contemporary champion of the experimental method in the sphere of aesthetics is the physiologist and psychologist, T. Ziehen. We are, however, distinctly sceptical in regard to the extant and future results of the special method he has invented, the method of absolute predicates; for how vastly different are the meanings attached by different people to words like pleasant, quite pleasant, and very pleasant! And how different, too, are the sources, in adult minds, from which such feelings may be derived! Indeed, it seems extremely doubtful whether the aesthetic value of even elementary objects could be determined in this way. There is, besides, throughout the work of Ziehen a certain intellectualism and insensitiveness, a tendency to regard artistic sympathy as merely "an accessory moment"<sup>1</sup> in aesthetic experience, subordinate in rank

<sup>1</sup> T. Ziehen: *Vorlesungen über Ästhetik*, Pt. 2, p. 350.

and grade to the appreciation of abstract forms. Moreover, the treatment of artistic creation is brief out of all proportion to that of the enjoyment of beauty.

## 7. THE THEORY OF EINFÜHLUNG

Lipps is the classical exponent of the theory of *Einfühlung*, which he has applied in greater detail than any of his contemporaries to every aspect of art and aesthetic appreciation; this theory has received more general acceptance than any other, and it has succeeded in dominating aesthetic speculation on the Continent throughout the present century, as much by the reaction it provoked against the entire psychological method as by the renown and favour it acquired among the psychological aestheticians themselves.

We do not reproach this philosopher, as many others have done, either with employing his principle as the key to many experiences outside the sphere of beauty,—for he is always careful to distinguish between *Einfühlung* in general and aesthetic *Einfühlung*—or for making use of a term whose significance is oscillating and imprecise, but rather with attempting to reduce the richness and variety of aesthetic experience to a single aspect, which, however significant and however profound, represents inevitably but one meagre facet of the whole. Our disinterestedness and detachment from practical and ideal interests in the contemplation of beauty, the glow of pleasure with which it suffuses the heart, the immediate joy of our senses in the delicate perfume and brilliant colouring of a flower, the calm delight we feel in a balanced, harmonious, and symmetrical structure, these, after all, are vital aspects of our aesthetic experience for which artistic sympathy offers no substitute and no explanation. If eclecticism is the proper name for the acceptance of a plurality of principles, then those who care for nothing but the truth



in the sphere of aesthetics must avow themselves impenitent eclectics.

The utter impossibility of reducing the whole of this philosophical discipline to a single, all-embracing formula accounts for a curious and radical contradiction enshrined in the work of Lipps; at the very beginning of his *Ästhetik* he introduces surreptitiously a number of purely formal principles, the laws of uniformity, of unity within a manifold, of monarchic subordination, in spite of a persistent reiteration elsewhere that aesthetic *Einfühlung* or sympathy is the unique and uncontested source of aesthetic delight.

The conflict between objectivism and subjectivism in aesthetics has been extraordinarily confused by the many different meanings attached to these expressions. In so far as the objectivists maintain that aesthetic experience is dependent on a particular structure and configuration of the external world, that the specific size and combination of atoms and molecules that determine the character of a work of art or natural object is a *conditio sine qua non* of all delight in beauty, that unless the moon and the sun and the stars really illumined the heavens we could never vibrate to the flushed glory of dawn, to the calm of sunset, or the radiant mystery of night, we should readily assent, with Lipps and Dessoir, to the existence of a definite objective aspect to the experience we are engaged in examining. For a complete and consequent subjectivism it should be as simple for us to conjure beauty by a fiat of the will as it is to speak or to move our limbs. But, on the other hand, when subjectivists like Hume<sup>1</sup> assert that beauty itself is to be found nowhere outside the mind, we should agree that aesthetic value, like truth, and goodness, and holiness, is essentially and ineradicably subjective, that, though its appearance may be conditioned by the

<sup>1</sup> Hume: *Essays, Of the Standard of Taste*.

atomic structure of art and nature, the most significant features of aesthetic experience are qualities of the mind rather than qualities of material objects, that the universe is blessed by the existence of beauty only at those rare moments when men and women are transformed into creative or contemplative artists. The common illusion that beauty is as much an attribute of a lovely portrait as its spatial extension vanishes directly we detect its cause, the prior illusion, produced by the unconscious act of projection, that emotion and pleasure reside in an inanimate object. We have thus discovered a grain of truth in each of the contending doctrines; from the objectivists we have learnt that the experience of beauty is conditioned necessarily by the special atomic structure of art and nature, while the subjectivists have taught us that the most essential and outstanding characteristics of this experience—artistic sympathy, disinterestedness, appreciative delight—are psychic rather than material entities.

Lipps, in common with the great majority of eminent aestheticians in the modern era, declares aesthetics to be a normative as well as a descriptive science; it prescribes principles for the aesthetic judgment and rules for the production of works of art as well as describing the attitude of aesthetic enjoyment and the process of artistic creation. The reason he advances is simply that, if we know the causes and conditions of a given effect, then we learn, *ipso facto*, the laws of its production. This argument appears to us quite incontrovertible, but it applies, of course, as well to the natural sciences as to the philosophical disciplines; it is in this sense that we should call aesthetics a normative and prescriptive science, and not because we hold for a moment, like the nineteenth-century metaphysicians, that artistic laws can be deduced from *a priori* beliefs about the nature of reality. It should be

added that our aesthetic norms, which represent the general rules of right artistic production and right aesthetic judgment, are essentially hypothetical rather than categorical injunctions; they declare that if you really desire to estimate a dramatic performance or a musical composition at their true value, you should apply certain standards with which those who have made a profound and prolonged study of these arts are acquainted, but of course they do not forbid the philistine spectator to prefer a music-hall "turn" to Othello or a jazz band to a Beethoven symphony. They do not force or oblige the uncultivated to develop their artistic tastes, far less to become practising artists, while imposing themselves as rigorously on the truly artistic disposition as an obvious obligation on the moral conscience or the principles of truth on the conscience of those engaged in the great quest for exact knowledge.

But, though we are convinced, in spite of such eminent writers as Anatole France and Jules Lemaître, and in spite of the immense *de facto* variations of taste at different historical epochs, that there are definite standards and canons of merit and demerit in art, and that the popular dictum *de gustibus non est disputandum* is as erroneous as it is perverse, we are unable to extend the analogy between aesthetic and other scientific norms as far as Lipps, and to regard aesthetic science as standing in the same relation to art as mechanics to engineering or physiology to medicine. For it is a commonplace of experience that no amount of instruction and learning has ever produced a really great artist, and that no poet of the first rank owes his genius to Aristotle, Horace, or Boileau; this explains itself immediately we realize that it is no more possible to produce emotion in ourselves by conscious and deliberate volition than it is to direct the machinery of our vegetative or vascular system,

an insuperable psychological difficulty that renders the aesthetic norms almost useless to the professional artist.

This is the eternal gulf between knowledge and practice in the domain of beauty; were it once bridged we should never be driven to acknowledge the greatness of a work of art while confessing that we are unable to appreciate it ourselves, or to wonder why the philosopher with all his knowledge accomplishes less than the artist with little or none. The truly great artist realizes the laws of aesthetics quite unconsciously and without deliberate choice, he is impelled towards them by sheer, blind, inevitable instinct, by that power of inspiration which is the birthright of real genius, while the truly sensitive spectator responds spontaneously, and without reflection, to the softest touch of beauty in the world about him; artistic vision and inspiration, unerring natural taste, these are among those highest gifts that nature alone can bestow, and no amount of study, however prolonged and however deep, can take their place or achieve their goal in life. It was in this sense that Goethe, speaking as one of the world's supreme lyricists, declared that the true poem was always a "Gelegenheitsgedicht", an utterance born suddenly and inevitably of the experience of a profoundly sensitive being. And it is in this sense, too, that the artist rightly claims his freedom from external constraint and his superiority to all written laws.

Nevertheless, it would be unjust and unfair to deprive the norms of beauty of all practical and utilitarian significance whatever, and to relegate their significance to the sphere of pure speculation; they do possess a very definite educational value, for they enable us to modify and improve our own taste by contact with what we know to be great and good art, and to offer to the young the best possible opportunities for the full development of their natural propensities in this direction.

There can be little doubt that of all the aestheticians of the present century none has a deeper or more catholic aesthetic experience on which to base his speculations, a greater gift for the cold scientific analysis of the astoundingly complex, delicate, and varied phenomena which it embraces, or a profounder philosophical grasp of the nature and scope of the great human values, than Volkelt; he has succeeded in enriching the study of aesthetics by most of the relevant discoveries of exact science in modern times, while keeping it closely in touch, like the leading thinkers of the previous century, with ultimate philosophical issues.

Nevertheless, it is possible and even necessary to cavil at some of the findings of his extraordinarily voluminous and penetrating work on our subject. In the first place, though we should agree that the most fruitful method of aesthetics is still introspective and psychological, it would appear difficult and even impossible to include the objective aspect of the experience of beauty in a rigorously psychological investigation; we would urge that, not only is aesthetics by no means the purely psychological discipline of Lipps and Volkelt, being a branch of knowledge that demands the application of other methods besides those of mental science, but even that the objective method of art science and sociology, which examines the relations between art, nature, society, and the subjective experience of the beautiful, as well as the actual structure of nature and art, is itself a separate and independent—though always subordinate—instrument of research and discovery.

If aesthetics may be defined as the science and philosophy of aesthetic experience in its very widest sense, if such experience, wherever and whenever it arises, be assigned as the legitimate object of this branch of human knowledge, then we are at perfect liberty to adopt as many

different methods as our ultimate purpose entails. We accept as the first of these, and far the most significant from the standpoint of science, the psychological method, which is above all introspective, being based on the catholic and sensitive response of the philosopher himself to natural and artistic beauty as well as on the judgments and self-scrutiny of artists, connoisseurs, and dilettantes; this method of course includes, though in a strictly subordinate capacity, the fruits of experimental, psycho-analytic, and phenomenological investigations. This leads us, naturally and inevitably, from the subject to the object, from the creation and contemplation of beauty to art and nature, from the psychological to the objective method, which enlists in its service sociology and the whole history of civilized art.

But the incidence of aesthetic experience extends far beyond the mature and cultured mind of civilized peoples, for the seed from which the fairest blossoms have sprung exists already in the growing child and the primitive man; to detect the origins of art and the appreciation of beauty amid a multitude of strictly practical interests, to trace their gradual unfolding in the life of the child and the barbarian, we must add a genetic method to the two that have gone before, and increase our list of tributary sciences by anthropology, ethnology, prehistory, and child psychology. And finally, after the entire field has been traversed and retraversed by vivid experience and sober reflection, it is high time to ask what light art and beauty are able to shed on the greatest enigma of all, on the enigma of life, of being, of existence itself, to apply at last the metaphysical method, and to transform aesthetics, abruptly but deliberately, from exact science into speculative philosophy.

The foregoing sketch of the vast but essential task that confronts our discipline, and of the various methods

whereby it may be accomplished, enables us to direct another critical shaft against the system of Volkelt; for in spite of its huge and terrifying size, it is very far from being complete, the author limiting himself almost entirely to data furnished him by the mature and civilized aesthetic consciousness, and, save for one attempt to trace the development of *Einfühlung* in the child's mind, neglecting completely the artistic production and aesthetic appreciativeness of the child, as well as the origins and unfolding of art among prehistoric and primitive peoples. While vindicating the genetic method as an indispensable weapon in the armoury of the aesthetician, Volkelt has left to others its actual application to such problems as it is capable of solving; and this omission is responsible for the one gaping lacuna in his aesthetic system.

This philosopher's psychological analysis of the appreciation and creation of beauty is more subtle and more profound than that of any other aesthetician of his school, including even Lipps; by introducing the concept of the subconscious the animating act of *Einfühlung* is made more intelligible, by insisting on the existence of real or reactive feelings, such as those of hostility or favour towards the object of contemplation, it becomes possible to distinguish sharply between the emotions attributed to the object and those that are always attached to the subject, and by treating pleasure as the product and result of the different moments of the aesthetic impression, confusion is avoided between artistic sympathy and the exquisite delight for which it is manifestly responsible.

Now the psychological aspect of Volkelt's work is primarily a description and explanation of the whole phenomenon of *Einfühlung*, and we, for our part, should agree with him that artistic sympathy is the central and dominating, though by no means the sole, feature of man's experience of beauty. We should also assent to the view of

both Volkelt and Lipps that *Einfühlung* in general, the animation by us of the external world, extends far beyond the domain of beauty, being clearly visible in the ordinary perception of our fellow-men and in the spontaneous anthropomorphism, preserved for us by mythology, of the savage and the child; aesthetic *Einfühlung*—what we prefer to call artistic sympathy—is evidently distinct from the more general variety both by reason of its adhesion to the percept by psychological necessity, without any invention of purely chimeric beings, and on account of the greater vividness and intensity of emotion it owes to the severance from those practical and selfish interests that clog the wheels of sympathy in ordinary life.

At the same time, the sympathetic emotion that we feel at the moment of aesthetic contemplation should be carefully separated from the whole gamut of ordinary emotions that we experience in daily life. The main difference is, that being sympathetic only and not personal, it is less intense, vivid, and overwhelming than the joys and sorrows that are the very fabric of our nature. Consequently, it endures in our minds for a shorter period and is more easily controlled by the will; this enables us to liberate ourselves from the emotions stirred in us by the spectacle of art or nature as soon as we desire, and to experience a very large number of such emotions, sometimes of the most opposing and antagonistic order, in an extremely brief space of time. And further, aesthetic emotions seem always to belong to and happen in the object, to be a quality or attribute of some person or thing perceived in the outer world or with the mind's eye, to be attached indissolubly to something beyond and other than the self; whereas ordinary practical emotions are invariably felt as part and parcel, as the very tissue, of the self, of the "I", of the subject in whose soul they are by the ineluctable force of circumstance produced.



But what exactly is this profound and vivid sympathy peculiar to the artist? It consists essentially in the animation and humanizing of the great realms of art and nature, in the infusion and projection of our own emotions and desires, by the irresistible power of an exuberant vitality and a fertile imagination, into the external objects that surround us on every side. We live the tormented lives of the men and women in a novel of Dostoievski or in a great Shakespearean or Greek tragedy, criminals and heroes, young and old alike, suffering agonies in their sufferings and delighting in their delights; we share the nostalgic melancholy of a Chopin nocturne, the joy and tenderness and despair of a Schumann lied, the titanic emotions of a Beethoven symphony or a Wagnerian opera, and the religious fervour of a Bach oratorio; when, indeed, we are really immersed in nature we seem to lose ourselves completely, to fling defiance from the pine, to meander lazily in the stream, to whisper in the trees and to sigh in the breeze, to flutter with the butterfly and to soar with the bird, to droop among the flowers in summer heat and to raise our heads again refreshed by dew, or, in a final and more tremendous metamorphosis, to howl and thunder from the storm at sea, hurling ourselves remorselessly with the foaming breakers upon helpless fishermen and a defenceless shore.

This, however, is no more than a description of an experience that admits very many degrees of intensity, according as it transpires in a poetic or a pedestrian soul, and it is obviously enough the first duty of the aesthete to bring forward a plausible psychological explanation. Here, again, we are at one with Volkelt; the essential and characteristic feature of artistic sympathy from the psychological standpoint is the peculiarly intimate fusion of percept and emotion, the projection of our own psychic life that follows instantaneously the perception of an

object's external appearance. In ordinary perception there is little or no emotion, in ordinary emotion the psychic disturbance is attributed to the self and not to an outside thing, while in true aesthetic perception vivid sympathetic emotion is immediately, by an innate and inherited mechanism, projected into the heart of the object that confronts us. We cannot allow, as Witasek maintains, that the mood or emotion in question is merely thought of or represented by the spectator, for in that case the essence of the experience has vanished and we are left with a cold intellectual attitude.

This brings us to one of the most delicate and difficult problems of aesthetics; is *Einfühlung*, like sensation or feeling, an innate and ultimate property of the human mind, or can it be reduced to another and wider faculty, such as the association of ideas, of which it is no more than a special variety? On this point we find considerable divergence of opinion among the different members of the psychological school. For Lotze, Fechner, and Siebeck, it is no more than normal recollection based on association by similarity; for Külpe, Stern, and, more recently, L. A. Reid,<sup>1</sup> it is an example of ordinary fused association, while, on the other hand, according to Meumann<sup>2</sup> and the great protagonists of the *Einfühlung* hypothesis it is an innate mental mechanism that cannot be reduced to the principle of association or to any other psychic activity at all.

The immediacy of the relation between the percept and the emotion, the instantaneous fusion of the two at the very moment we become aware of the object, sets the recollection hypothesis in flagrant contradiction with the plain facts of experience; but it cannot serve, in our opinion, to establish the autonomy of *Einfühlung vis-*

<sup>1</sup> L. A. Reid: *A Study in Aesthetics*, pp. 97-103.

<sup>2</sup> E. Meumann: *Einführung in die Ästhetik der Gegenwart*, pp. 50-54.

*à-vis* that extremely common psychological phenomenon, constantly apparent in perception, immediate or fused association. We are persuaded to concur in this matter with Lipps and Volkelt in deference to quite other considerations; the first laugh that puckers the cheeks of a baby in response to his mother's smile, long before he can have learnt to connect her facial expression with benefits received by him, and the existence of melodies in music and visible shapes in nature that evoke definite moods without remotely resembling any human gesture or utterance, seem to indicate clearly the *a priority* and independence of *Einfühlung* in regard to the whole principle of association. The view here expressed is borne out by M. Scheler's elaborate and detailed study of the fundamental nature of sympathy; for he maintains that it is an ultimate and original function of the mind, "*eine letzte ursprüngliche Funktion des Geistes*", which cannot be evolved from or reduced to other and better-known psychic processes such as a sexual or a herd impulse, imitation, or maternal love.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, it should never be forgotten how large and significant a part our past experience actually plays in the process of artistic sympathy, and how much it depends on the intimacy of our acquaintance with other beings and on the breadth and depth of our own emotional life. Volkelt has done a real service in stressing the importance of such mediating factors as recollection and motor sensations.

In selecting four separate but co-operative aesthetic norms, each illustrating a highly important aspect of the experience of beauty, this philosopher shows a distinct advance on the strictly unitary thesis of Lipps. The first norm prescribes the fundamental subjective and objective conditions of artistic sympathy. In the absence of these,

<sup>1</sup> M. Scheler: *Wesen und Form der Sympathie*, pp. 64, 154, 201-243.

we would urge, no experience can be properly termed aesthetic, save only the disinterested delights of the senses and those provided by proportion, symmetry, or any other formal quality. Thus sport and play, even when they are neither propaedeutic nor crudely combative in aim, lie altogether outside the sphere of the beautiful. The second norm enunciates the famous principle of aesthetic form, which is as old as Plato<sup>1</sup> and which dominated philosophical reflection on beauty till the dawn of the Romantic movement; the formula most frequently employed, and perhaps more clear and apt than complete organic oneness, is that of unity within a manifold.

The third invokes a diminution or attenuation of the subject's feeling for reality, and expresses, in a distinctly original way, the almost universally accepted doctrine of the disinterestedness and detachment of the aesthetic attitude, its complete freedom from the domination of practical or ideal interests. It will be remembered how Kant, in his examination of the aesthetic judgment, decides that according to the category of quality it is contemplative or disinterested; this follows naturally from the peculiar nature of aesthetic delight, which is free from those practical interests that are responsible for the pleasures of the senses and for satisfaction in the morally good.<sup>2</sup> No philosopher has insisted more vigorously or more eloquently than Schopenhauer on the freedom of the aesthetic attitude from servitude to desire. Both in the pursuit of scientific truth and in the conduct of daily life we are the helpless and deluded victims of our remorseless and insatiable volition; but at the moment of pure, disinterested contemplation we are released from

<sup>1</sup> Plato tells us in the *Philebus* "that measure and symmetry are beauty," and that "true pleasures are those which are given by beauty of colour and form."

<sup>2</sup> Kant: *Critique of Judgement*, pp. 45-55.

the pressure of our egotistical cravings, we celebrate the prison sabbath of the will, the wheel of Ixion comes finally to rest.<sup>1</sup>

When the principle of disinterestedness has been challenged, as it was by Nietzsche, its rejection has been due to a serious misunderstanding. For no one seriously maintains that the impassioned devotion that beauty awakens in the soul, and the spirit of selfless service in which it is pursued by the elect, are not part and parcel of the truly artistic vision; the principle under discussion really signifies that the creative or contemplative moment is not overshadowed by organic, practical, or ideal interests,—such as appetite for food and drink, lascivious or acquisitive desire, religious, moral, or speculative issues—involving so complete an abandonment to, and absorption in the experience itself, that all alien and irrelevant interests, whether in themselves noble or base, are automatically excluded. It is in this sense, and only in this sense, that the aesthetic attitude may be described as completely disinterested.

The fourth and last norm stresses the importance of an essentially cognitive factor in the experience of beauty, an aspect usually neglected by philosophers, namely the significance and value for us of the subjects selected by the artist for representation. As we have already seen, this feature was noted by Taine and more recently by W. T. Stace, and it deserves recognition so long as the idea embodied is not divorced from its sensuous and emotional accompaniment; failing this, the experience becomes immediately indistinguishable from the awareness of perceptual, scientific, moral, or religious truth.

This element is specially evident in the profound symbolical significance of Oriental art, which, like that

<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer: *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, Bd. I, pp. 269, 270.

of the devout inhabitant of the Nile valley, has been from the remotest ages hieratic in essence, dominated throughout the length and breadth of its evolution by themes imposed upon it from without by the vast cosmogonies of philosophy and religion, and seemingly content to accept those traditional canons prescribed to it originally by priests and holy men. The message it conveys—so the Oriental artist would himself contend—is its inspiration and justification, its purely artistic merit a matter of quite secondary importance.<sup>1</sup>

In raising certain objections to the metaphysical theory of Volkelt, no attempt will be made to delineate in detail the proffered counter-claims, which would be in effect to write a separate metaphysical treatise; and further, so doubtful and problematic are the conclusions of philosophy,—owing partly to the fragmentary and incomplete chart of human knowledge, and partly to the intervention of the philosophical temperament itself—that no critical suggestions we may offer here should be regarded as more than a tentative if plausible hypothesis. The demand that men make of metaphysics is that it should perfectly harmonize the separate aspects of their experience; within the picture of existence as a whole, of ultimate and substantial reality, that it presents for their approval, the findings of science in the spheres of matter, life, and mind, and of philosophy in the sphere of aesthetic, moral, religious, and cognitive values, have an equal and an imperative claim to delineation.

Armed with this criterion, let us approach the speculative achievement of Volkelt. Are we, in the first place, aware by intuition that our ideal human values are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Coomaraswamy: *The Dance of Siva*; and, for more detailed studies in narrower fields, Zimmer's *Kunstform und Yoga im Indischen Kultbild*, and K. M. Ball's beautifully illustrated *Decorative Motives of Oriental Art*.

absolute and unconditioned by the particular circumstances in which they have originated and developed, by the actual conditions of their existence in time and space? The reality of such an intuition, as an integral feature of human nature, can hardly be maintained when confronted by the many philosophers and ordinary folk who believe, as we do, after calm reflection on the course of history and experience, that our values are strictly relative to the peculiar structure of our minds, representing, like the lower biological values of animals and plants, those objects and aims that satisfy the deepest and most urgent desires in our being; that, further, they can be found already in germ in the social organization of primitive tribes, and that their slow and fluctuating growth can be traced through the crude periods of prehistoric and primitive culture to its apogee in the marvellous civilizations of the East and West. It is true, indeed, that for men of the highest type the indefatigable pursuit of beauty, the slow perfecting of human relations, and the patient but glorious search for scientific or metaphysical truth, alone render human life really worth the living; while, at the same time, their fellows are dreaming of the material pleasures that so rarely materialize, and their humble cousins in the vegetable and animal kingdoms are wholly absorbed in a bloody struggle to preserve and perpetuate their fleeting lives. But, nevertheless, once we have abandoned intuition and descended to the evidence of the senses, there is nothing whatever to show that the higher values are less relative to the mentality of the higher man, less variable with his circumstances in the past, or less bound up with his fortunes in the future, than are the lower values to the nature and destiny of life at lower levels of organic evolution.

It would appear that the Protagorean principle of relativity is rapidly gaining ground in modern thought,

not only as applied to the realm of values, but even in the sphere of pure science; for space and time themselves, which Newton believed to be one and the same for all observers, entities entirely unaffected by the mind itself, have been proved by Einstein to change and vary with degree of motion; though, of course, the difference between the velocity of terrestrial objects is so small as to render insignificant the margin of error in all our measurements.<sup>1</sup> The most recent thinking in political economy strongly urges the relativity of all economic "quantities" to the material needs of human beings as expressed in effective demand<sup>2</sup>; luxury trades which might flourish in a society of sybarites would be entirely suppressed by a wave of asceticism, while the angels in heaven who, like the lilies, neither toil nor spin, can have learnt nothing of production, distribution, and exchange. Without the clamorous urgency of human desire, and the niggardliness of nature in supplying those material goods for which it craves, not even the most primitive economic systems would ever have arisen. Thus the notion of relativity establishes an interesting and important analogy between values in the economic and values in the philosophical sense.

But once the absoluteness of human values has been rejected, the theistic metaphysic of Volkelt immediately collapses; there is no longer any justification for his assumption of the existence of a single, absolute value, for the absolute and timeless consciousness it implies, or for the teleological system by means of which the temporal is brought into touch with the eternal. Nor can we establish the anthropocentric universe of religion by recourse to the natural sciences, which, indeed, point in

<sup>1</sup> A. Einstein: *The Theory of Relativity*, pp. 12-29, 59-62.

<sup>2</sup> L. Robbins: *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, pp. 45-71.



a diametrically opposite direction. Biology, it is true, tells a story of gradual progress from the first undifferentiated unicellular organisms to multicellular organisms with a complex and delicate nervous system, from unconsciousness and blind instinct to the luminous consciousness of man and his great intellect, whereby he has at last become the master of himself and of all living creatures. But—and herein lies the fallacy of such evolutionary optimists as Spencer and Alexander, who have mistaken biological for cosmic progress—the realm of life is only a province in the immense empire of inorganic nature, and here we can detect no trace of a dominating purpose favourable to man, or of a scheme of things in which he figures as the hero.

For living organisms sprang into existence only about eight million years ago on a small satellite of one star in the galactic system, and they are destined to perish, with all their marvellous works, as soon as the earth, on which at present they flourish, is frozen fast for lack of heat from the waning sun. It appears, indeed, as though life, and consciousness, and all the ideal aspirations of man, were but islands thrown up momentarily by some gigantic convulsion of nature in the endless ocean of time, hapless fragments of terra firma it is ceaselessly destroying and will soon submerge, wiping out every trace of their brief existence from its tranquil and unruffled surface. Such is the history of one stupendous tragedy staged by chance and rung down by death. When we enquire further as to the destiny of the universe after the fleeting episode of life is concluded, we are told that, by the universal process of increasing entropy, energy will ultimately be distributed evenly throughout at a low uniform temperature, too low to permit the existence of any living substance.

Whether a death without resurrection is the ultimate goal towards which nature is moving, or whether, a far

more likely hypothesis when we reflect that matter must have been built up before it could begin to crumble, atoms are being constructed again in the remotest depths of interstellar space, so that the movement of things is really cyclical, and nature's experiments are without a term, matters very little to our argument; for it is clear enough that in a universe of this kind there is no place at all for a beneficent deity or for conscious purposes outside the range of human aims, that chance, that nature, that blind and overpowering necessity, the "*ἀνάγκη*" that overshadows Greek tragedy, is the real arbiter of human destinies, and that the strict determinism that rules as well in the stars as in the minds of men is mechanical rather than teleological.

Spinoza, in his celebrated attack on the reigning theism, declared "that nature has no fixed aim in view, and that all final causes are the fabrication of men"<sup>1</sup>; with this opinion we are, it need hardly be said, in complete agreement, and also with Russell's fine description of man's precarious position in an openly hostile universe,<sup>2</sup> while adopting for our part the spirit of glad acceptance and wholehearted resignation rather than that of rebellious discontent.

But hitherto our observations have been critical rather than constructive, a demolition rather than a building up, being concerned in refuting a point of view that appears to us incompatible with the scientific outlook. Let us now proceed to the positive aspect of our task.

Meyerson, in one of his brilliant epistemological essays, has shown how the attempt of man to master the universe by means of his intelligence, to explain completely the phenomena he encounters in his experience, is always an effort to reduce variety and diversity to undifferentiated

<sup>1</sup> Spinoza: *Ethics*, Appendix, Pt. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Russell: *Mysticism and Logic and other Essays*, pp. 46-57.

unity<sup>1</sup>; and is it not possible that nature may be really penetrable through and through by thought, that matter and spirit are everywhere continuous, that life, mind, diversity in time and space, may only be ultimate in the present fragmentary and incomplete state of knowledge, that the stubborn opposition of subject and object which appears to vanish in the deepest sympathy may really be an illusion, and that in absolute reality all people and things are one? If we were then asked of what reality is itself composed, we should hazard in answer the perennial thought of idealism, and one that has been revived by some great contemporary scientists,—that it must be at least akin to the stuff of which our own minds are made.

Let us now turn our attention to the other supporters of *Einfühlung*. In the pages of Herder, the poet, philosopher, and friend of Goethe, as in so much of the literature of the Romantic movement, the animation of nature and the pantheistic fusion of the human and the world soul are brilliantly described, but as yet hardly any attempt is made to discover a psychological explanation of the experience. Lotze shares with Siebeck and Fechner the error of confusing artistic sympathy, in which the past and present experience are instantaneously fused, with ordinary reminiscent association; but, even though he makes no attempt to distinguish between artistic and ordinary sympathy, he deserves praise for having attempted to find a scientific and psychological explanation for this phenomenon.

The perception by F. T. Vischer of the immediacy and spontaneity of *Einfühlung*, and so of its independence of ordinary association and recollection, is a distinct psychological advance on the work of Lotze. But, though he distinguishes skilfully between artistic symbolism and that of mythology and religion, he makes no attempt to draw

<sup>1</sup> E. Meyerson: *De l'Explication dans les Sciences*, p. 354.

a boundary between it and the sympathy and real emotions of ordinary life; besides, there is a distinct lack of correlation between his old metaphysical standpoint and the psychological discoveries he succeeded later in making. His purely empirical and psychological method, and his fundamental notion of the lending of human personality to inanimate objects, stamps Siebeck as a forerunner of the theory of *Einfühlung*; but there are obvious psychological blunders in his work. P. Stern consolidates the psychological advance already achieved by F. T. and R. Vischer; but, though he realizes that artistic sympathy involves immediate and fused association, he believes, with Külpe, that this faculty is not autonomous and innate, but rather a peculiar variety of the linking together of ideas by similarity, and therefore reducible in a last analysis to the ancient principle of association. There is a wavering and a hesitation that culminate in veritable contradiction in Vernon Lee's attitude to her central conception of "aesthetic empathy"; at one moment she is a pure sensationalist, insisting that kinaesthetic sensations alone are projected by us into the object, at another admitting—no doubt under the influence of Lipps—that we also attribute to it our moods and feelings and volitional tendencies. Belonging probably herself, like Groos, to a definitely motor type of imagination, she tended to exaggerate the part played in the normal experience of beauty by sensations of movement. There is, of course, considerable individual variation in the importance of this factor; but we should agree with Müller-Freienfels that we attribute muscular tension and bodily effort as well as mental tendencies and emotions to external objects, more especially in the case of architecture.

Though G. Scott completely neglects the highly important formal aspect of architecture, he makes

extremely clear that we project both sensations of movement and emotions in the contemplation and appreciation of lovely buildings; this represents a distinct advance on the confused and theological aesthetic of architecture produced by Ruskin. The sacrifice of the extraordinary complexity of aesthetic experience to the intellectual urge for unity is a common defect among philosophers, and it appears clearly enough in the reduction by Basch of the experience of beauty to its purely emotional aspect, to symbolical sympathy; but the author seems himself to have observed this flaw in an extremely brilliant work, and, while retaining his faith in the supreme significance of feeling, to allow, in perception, the rightful existence of a purely cognitive factor.<sup>1</sup> He commits, besides, a very patent confusion between the delight, the enjoyment, which accompanies and suffuses the contemplative experience, with the sympathetic emotion—itself sometimes agonizing—that can be detected as one of the causes which in co-operation produce the feeling of aesthetic pleasure. The vagaries of taste, which the author uses to shatter all aesthetic norms, show rather how frequently judgment has been swayed by irrelevant considerations. As a psychological study of aesthetic experience the work of the professor of aesthetics at the Sorbonne is extraordinarily subtle and penetrating, an offshoot of Taine's empiricism which it pushes brilliantly to its logical and scientific conclusion in the sphere of beauty; but at present his treatment of the wide domain of art is far from being complete.

The metaphysical system of Bergson has not at present been crowned by an aesthetic; but the seed from which this could spring is already sown by his insistence on the intimate relationship between the beautiful and the sympathetic. His treatment of the comic appears to us

<sup>1</sup> V. Basch: *Essai critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*. Préface.

more ingenious than true. If laughter could be ultimately explained as a useful biological function, one would suppose the march from barbarism to civilization to be accompanied by a progressive diminution of the comic sense; in point of fact the reverse is true, the subtlest shades of humour having crept into literature and life since the Renaissance. And we are even to believe that as soon as we are completely civilized and perfectly adapted to our environment we shall no longer laugh! The whole study smacks more of a deduction from his biological metaphysic than of an unbiassed examination of the facts.

The central conception in the work of K. Groos, that of "the play of inner imitation", rouses a host of objections. The expression "inner imitation" is used in different senses at different periods in his writings; it was employed at first to include both our sympathetic participation in the real or imagined emotions of others and its motor accompaniment, later to indicate the motor process alone, the "Miterleben" being carefully distinguished from the kinaesthetic sensations by which it is facilitated. Again, in his later work, he admits that tranquil contemplation is a genuine and original variety of aesthetic delight, if less significant than the vivid emotion of sympathetic union. Apart from these internal contradictions, it is clear enough that inner imitation is entirely meaningless save as the reproduction in our own bodies of movements, attitudes, or gestures in the world outside; imitation inevitably presupposes an object to be copied, so that it is impossible for us to mimic emotions which exist only in our own minds, and the application of this expression to the appreciation of the unconscious and inanimate in art and nature is quite senseless. The merit of Groos lies in the stress he laid on the vital rôle of kinaesthetic sensations, real, incipient, or merely represented, as

intermediaries between the object perceived and the sympathetic emotion which we transfer to it; and, above all, in his placing of sympathetic feeling at the heart of the experience of beauty. The fallacious identification of the aesthetic and the play activities has been exposed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

## 8. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY

Volckelt is strongly opposed to the whole phenomenological tendency to substitute a mystical "Wesensanschauung" for the empirical description and analysis of aesthetic experience, and urges that such a method, which is more concerned with the object than the subject, is definitely hostile to the really fruitful methods of introspective psychology. He maintains that the intuition of being in the phenomenological doctrine is a pure illusion, and that its real function lies in a detailed description of the intimate and central structure of conscious states; it is thus a kind of descriptive psychology,—as opposed to etiological psychology—and that portion of aesthetics which is devoted to an account of the peculiar essence of aesthetic emotion and delight is therefore, properly speaking, phenomenological.<sup>2</sup>

We, too, are profoundly sceptical about the supernatural "Wesensintuition" of the phenomenological school, and regard it, like the metaphysical method of nineteenth-century philosophy, as hostile to the development of the psychological and objective aspects of aesthetic science. Nor can we assent to the aristocratic arrogance of the phenomenological attitude, which would debar from aesthetic speculation all save the phenomenologists themselves and those who agree with them. There is, besides, a twofold contradiction at the very heart of their thought.

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*, pp. 28–29.

<sup>2</sup> J. Volckelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Bd. I, pp. 4, 12, 22, 23.

The phenomenological method of investigation, they declare, is neither the inductive nor the deductive method of ordinary scientific thinking, but rather the application of a novel, intuitive method; nevertheless, the results it has actually produced—certain generalizations about art and the enjoyment of beauty—could not have been obtained save by inference over a large number of individual examples. Again, in spite of their vehement protest that their contribution to our subject is an objective and not a psychological aesthetic, the fact remains that their most interesting and original production is a subtle psychological analysis of the aesthetic attitude in contemplative enjoyment.

A detailed criticism would enable us to register our protest against the inclusion of imitative values among the truly artistic values, on the ground that pleasure derived from this source extends also to photos, plaster casts, and so on, to many objects quite outside the sphere of art; but the mimetic theory has long been discredited. We would suggest, besides, that the criteria of aesthetic enjoyment might easily be reduced from three to two, the contemplativeness of the aesthetic attitude being an obvious corollary of its freedom from practical and ideal interests.

It is admirable that the phenomenologists should have isolated so completely the purely aesthetic from every other element in our experience, and insisted on the wide difference that exists between delight in the beautiful and those varieties of practical enjoyment, such as play and the lower pleasures, with which psychologists and even philosophers have in the past tended to confound it. This school of thought has already produced a brilliant monograph on the enjoyment of beauty, and, if it continues to combine rigour of analysis with closeness to actual experience, may well contribute more to the sphere of descriptive psychology in aesthetics.



## 9. ECLECTICISM

The principal title to fame of Bosanquet, as a philosopher of beauty, resides in his work as a historian of aesthetic theory. But the titanic task of compiling a complete history of aesthetics is beyond the powers of one philosopher, and far outside the scope of a single volume; besides, from the methodological standpoint it appears to us undesirable that the personal opinions of historians should be mingled indiscriminately with those of the writers he is expounding. Nevertheless, and in spite of certain very grave lacunae,<sup>1</sup> this work of Bosanquet remains in accuracy and comprehensiveness the best thing done by an English philosopher on the subject; its account of German metaphysical aesthetic in the nineteenth century is particularly brilliant.

In describing what is peculiar and specific to the sphere of beauty, he has the great merit of recognizing both emotional expressiveness and abstract form as essential features, refusing to sacrifice the variety of actual experience at the altar of perfect unity; but his elaboration of this central notion suffers from lack of any real psychological insight.

It is evident that in the cardinal idea of beauty as a synthesis of form and expressiveness Alexander has followed in the footsteps of his great predecessor, Bernard Bosanquet. The emphasis he lays on the aesthetic semblance or illusion, on form, expressiveness, and a disinterested frame of mind, as different but characteristic features of the experience of beauty, appears to us entirely justified; and, indeed, to render his contribution to aesthetics the most outstanding in contemporary English philosophy. The strong subjective tendency in regard to the beautiful, specially manifest in a recent pamphlet,<sup>2</sup> is

<sup>1</sup> J. Sully: *Mind*, 1893, Vol. II, pp. 110-117.

<sup>2</sup> *Art and Nature*, 1927.

hardly consistent with an earlier view according to which beauty, like the other tertiary qualities, was in part subjective and in part objective. The formalism of his most recent utterance, wherein art is defined as "something made to assume a significant form",<sup>1</sup> is another departure that appears inconsistent with the trend of his earlier work, and, in our opinion, not so close as this was to the real truth. The slender bulk of his writings on our subject has not enabled this philosopher to embrace either the variety or the complex detail of the problems germane to aesthetics; he has made no thorough and exhaustive study of either its psychological, objective, genetic, or metaphysical aspects, while touching deftly but lightly on them all.

#### 10. GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY OF ART AND BEAUTY

We are in complete agreement, in spite of the protests of the psychological aestheticians and scientists of art, with Meumann's conception of aesthetics as embracing the whole field of man's experience of the beautiful, with the objective problems presented by art as well as the psychological issues raised by artistic creation and aesthetic enjoyment. On the other hand, it would be easy to reduce the different provinces of the aesthetic from four to three, segregating only contemplative enjoyment, the creative activity, and the finished work of art; for the latter really covers the so-called domain of aesthetic culture, the minor or applied arts where beauty appears in subordination to practical purposes and biological needs.

The elaborate psychological analysis of the creative activity is a valuable contribution to our subject, but we cannot agree that the creative process, and not the

<sup>1</sup> "Beauty and Greatness in Art," 1930. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

contemplative attitude, should be the starting-point and the cardinal problem of psychological aesthetics; the peculiar difficulties which beset a scientific study of the former experience render it advisable, in our opinion, for the psychological aesthetician to set out from the latter, where the essence of the aesthetic process is at least equally manifest.

The theory which maintains that the enjoyment of the beautiful is an exact repetition and recapitulation of the corresponding creative activity, that the contemplative spectator is one with the artist, has been effectively exploded by a careful review of the real facts. In the first place, it fails altogether to account for our delight in nature, where it would be sheer anthropomorphism to talk of the production of things by a creative imagination. But, besides, it is impossible to ignore the many moments in the creative process to which nothing whatever corresponds in the contemplative experience; we do not, like the artist himself, continually correct, and alter, and improve our attitude to a work of art, we do not, like him, sketch a plan of the building before us, or mix the pigments we see on the canvas, or cast the bronze statue which confronts us on its pedestal, our minds are not contaminated by avarice, or social ambition, or the vulgar craving for success, motives which have mingled so often with the pure fount of artistic inspiration.

Not, of course, that anyone would deny that the more completely immersed we become in a poem or a symphony, the more we isolate ourselves from our surroundings and our own past experience, the nearer we approach to the imaginative flame that burned in the artist himself. The true interpretation of a work of art is always, indeed, that which approaches most closely the original conception, the conception of its producer, and in this sense profound and perfect appreciation is always,

at the same time, an imaginative recreation of the essence of the creative process; we, for our part, are only protesting against the facile confusion between an obvious analogy and a complete identity.

The work of Müller-Freienfels is valuable more by reason of its treatment of certain individual problems, such as those of artistic creation and artistic enjoyment, than for its handling of the wider and more general issues of aesthetics.

We cannot possibly agree to an extension of the term "aesthetics" which would cover religious and scientific as well as properly aesthetic values; with so broad a connotation as this it completely loses its meaning. Nor are we satisfied by the physiological explanation of artistic enjoyment, which depends, as we have indicated elsewhere, on an unverified and probably unverifiable hypothesis. Again, this philosopher's treatment of the arts shows a narrowness and intellectualism, a preoccupation with their purely formal structure<sup>1</sup>—"Wirkungsstil"—to the exclusion of their sensuous and emotional significance, that is surprising to a degree when we compare it with his catholic and sensitive attitude towards artistic enjoyment; at this point his work degenerates into pure formalism.

It is admirable, however, that he should insist on the remarkable variety of individual experience in the enjoyment of art; he notes the broad differences in psychological type which account at once for the one-sidedness of certain aesthetic doctrines—those, for instance, which stress unduly the emotional, the intellectual, or the motor factor—and for the divergence between the experience of different spectators in face of one and the same artistic product. He rightly draws attention to the plain fact that the enjoyment of art is by no means a recapitulation of the creative process, the latter involving always a number

<sup>1</sup> M. Bites-Palevitch: *L'Esthétique allemande contemporaine*, p. 197.

of purely practical moments that are necessarily absent from the experience of the spectator. In the detailed handling of such problems as this the excellence of his enquiry lies.

In his psychological study of the aesthetic attitude Külpe has rightly stressed the disinterested and contemplative relation to things, while, in our opinion, laying too little emphasis on the animating act of *Einfühlung*; as an associationist he is more plausible than most of his fellows, but, for reasons given elsewhere, we cannot ourselves consent to this interpretation of artistic sympathy.

Ribot's treatment of the creative imagination is more exact if less exalted than that of Séailles; but we are sceptical about the motor origin attributed to its every form, and the artistic imagination has been studied in greater detail and completeness by modern German aestheticians.

The Cambridge school has done no small service in drawing attention to the psychological harmony in the aesthetic attitude. Only in the contemplation of beauty do the higher and lower sides of human nature co-operate fraternally, disinterested detachment, lofty thought, and profound sympathy, combining harmoniously with brute sensation, pleasure, and every sort and kind of imagined emotion and desire; there is no longer repression and inhibition or merely partial satisfaction, for all the faculties of the mind operate together, and produce a pervading and unique delight. But, like so many other thinkers, they have lost the truth again by mistaking the part for the whole, and have exalted one feature of aesthetic experience until, for them, it has become equivalent to beauty in its entirety.

Witasek is the victim of an antiquated psychological atomism, and he seems, besides, to have a personal predilection for a quiet and aloof enjoyment of beautiful things. Hence, his transformation of the real emotion of

artistic sympathy into a mere representation of sympathetic emotions. As a psychological study the real merit of his work lies in an analysis of aesthetic feeling, which is cleverly distinguished from other mental processes, and which is allowed to include pain as well as pleasure. Its defect is an absence of really vivid experience of beauty.

The peculiar value of Stace's intellectualism is to be found in his insistence that, under certain circumstances, general ideas, the tools proper to philosophy and science, can and do enter, as a distinct source of enjoyment, into the realm of art. This is an aspect of the experience of beauty that the *Einfühlung* school, with the notable exception of Volkelt,<sup>1</sup> tends to neglect, and to which the formalists and the scientists of art are equally oblivious.

This factor is, of course, most clearly visible in the art of words, since these are the only really adequate vehicle for the communication of abstract notions; how few shreds would be left us of the beauty of Lucretius, or Milton, or Dante, of Shelley's *Prometheus*, Goethe's *Faust*, or Hardy's *Dynasts*, when these great poets and these great poems had been stripped of their lofty philosophical conception, the belief of a disinterested genius about the nature of man and his destiny in the scheme of things! The fallacy of this doctrine appears of course as soon as it turns this purely cognitive and intellectual factor into the unique and absolute essence of beauty; at this point it lapses into the hoary error of one-sided exaggeration.

The work of H. Cohen, so far as his method of thinking is concerned, is distinctly reactionary; instead of starting from the experience of beauty as an acknowledged fact of experience, he deduces the nature of, and necessity for, aesthetics from his conception of philosophy as a complete and unified system. In this way the scientific study of art and beauty becomes again dependent on the arbitrary and individual outlook of philosophy. The Kantian

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*, pp. 80, 182, 183.

character of this general outlook, in the case of Cohen, it would be irrelevant to criticize at this point.

And it seems a travesty of the extraordinarily complex consciousness of the creative artist or artistic spectator to maintain that their experience of beauty consists simply and solely of a feeling of love, however deep and pure, for human nature; besides, if we restrict ourselves to the emotional factor in the aesthetic consciousness and severely ignore every other, as all such emotion is sympathetic it may just as legitimately appear in the guise of fear, anger, or even hatred, as of love. This sentiment is no more the unique source of artistic production than it is of aesthetic enjoyment, and any dispassionate psychological study of the two processes would disprove the attractive but ineffectual view of Cohen.

We are furnished with no definition at all of art itself, save, perhaps, the manifestly erroneous assertion that "art is the product of genius",<sup>1</sup> though the separating principle adopted by the author stresses happily the significance of a particular medium, such as speech or musical tones. But to account for beauty as the task of creating beauty is to move in a vicious circle, and to introduce the concept of morality, "*Sittlichkeit*", as a presupposition of all artistic production is to limit unwarrantably the artist's right to depict human nature.

The abiding value of his work on aesthetics lies, not in a body of theoretical doctrine highly remote from actual experience, but in the application of this doctrine, in the course of his second volume, to the major arts; here we find a profound and sensitive understanding of the highest achievements of the fine arts, even though it might appear from his treatment of them that lyrical and dramatic poetry ended with Goethe, music with Beethoven (Wagner is not even mentioned), and sculpture with the super-human power of Michelangelo.

<sup>1</sup> H. Cohen: *Ästhetik*, Bd. I, p. 199.

## CHAPTER XVI

### OBJECTIVE THEORIES

#### I. THE THEORY OF THE SCIENCE OF ART

Utz and Dessoir are the most eminent German representatives of that new and popular school of thought, an open revolt against orthodox psychological aesthetics, which starts from the object rather than the subject, from the work of art itself, entirely detached from human observation, rather than focussing its investigations on the contemplative spectator or the creative artist, a school that insists vigorously on a complete divorce between aesthetics, "Ästhetik", and the general science of art, "allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft"; and that exalts the finished products of the artistic activity at the expense of the pure and disinterested enjoyment of the beautiful. This line of thought, which conceives the scientific investigation of aesthetic phenomena to be primarily a philosophy of art, is not by any means a novel departure in the history of aesthetic speculation. It was the underlying conception of the work of Taine, and, if we like to plunge yet deeper into the past, we should find it again at the base of Hegel's reflection in this sphere; for the mighty metaphysician limits the entire realm of the beautiful, which, according to him, is the proper subject-matter of aesthetics, to "the province of art", and art itself is considered, still more narrowly, to be nothing but "fine art".<sup>1</sup> This doctrine has, however, been suddenly revived in recent years, and now flourishes with all the opulence and intransigence of a new and original theory.

Volkelt rejects uncompromisingly the divorce between

<sup>1</sup> Hegel: *Philosophy of Fine Art*, Vol. I, p. 1.



aesthetics and the science of art, on the ground that the real problems of aesthetics are of two distinct varieties, some subjective, some objective; the traditional discipline cannot limit itself to a study of the subjective effect of the aesthetic object on the human observer, but should ask besides what conditions the work of art or natural object must fulfil if it is to produce an impression of beauty; to every subjective problem of aesthetics an objective problem corresponds, and vice versa; though, as the essential features of the experience of beauty always transpire in the subject, the objective study is subordinate in importance to the psychological, and works strictly in its service. A subjective aesthetic, focussed on the ego, should therefore be completed by an objective aesthetic interested primarily in the material object; the latter stands by no means in opposition to the purely psychological investigation, but is indeed encompassed by it.<sup>1</sup>

We, for our part, would challenge the basic assumption behind the doctrine of Uitz and those who, with him, have torn asunder the two disciplines of aesthetics and the science of art; namely, that aesthetics cannot and should not deal with the whole phenomenon of art, that it should restrict itself exclusively to beauty in the narrow sense, or even to the mind that rejoices and the vision that creates, leaving to other and more competent hands the material object in which the mind exults and which it often makes. We believe that subject and object are inextricably interwoven and intermingled in our experience of beauty, and that it is impossible for those who would explain and interpret this phenomenon in its entirety,—the right and proper function of aesthetics,—to neglect the part played either by the mind or by the material work of art; the science of art cannot be regarded as an

<sup>1</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 13–23; *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein*, pp. 1–16.

isolated and independent discipline but only as a tributary branch of the more general science of aesthetics, which is not—and here we part company from Volkelt—purely psychological in its scope, being deeply concerned, beyond and outside the human mind, with an objective investigation of the vast realms of art, nature, and society.

We would like also to challenge the diminution of the purely aesthetic element of our experience, which, according to Utitz, is of supreme importance only in the category of the beautiful, and which leads him to attach greater significance to the science of art than to aesthetics itself; it appears to us unquestionable, on the contrary, that the purely aesthetic ingredient of the whole experience is always, while more perfectly and completely realized in the fine arts than in nature, its most essential and dominating trait, that which renders it in fact an experience of beauty and not of goodness, truth, or ordinary practical life, so that, in reality, aesthetics delves to the very heart of the problem while the objective science of art contents itself with skirting the fringe.

It is, besides, highly contradictory for an art scientist to include in his general definition of art the purely psychological notion of purpose; and are there not many objects obviously constructed to stir the emotions of the spectator, such as propagandist oratory, pornography, sensational journalism, which are nevertheless entirely alien to the sphere of art?

We concur in the opinion that the real value and importance of the contribution of Utitz to our subject lie in a detailed analysis of the concrete work of art, as it exists apart from the human factor, rather than in the more general views he also expresses<sup>1</sup>; at the same time, the higher or lower values represented by the artist—

<sup>1</sup> M. Bites-Palevitch: *L'Esthétique allemande contemporaine*, p. 318.

“Darstellungswert”—would surely reflect his personal temperament and outlook,—“Seinsschicht”,—so that the necessary conditions of the object’s existence might well be reduced from five to four. We dissent, besides, from the common belief in a qualitative difference, a difference in kind, between talent and genius, holding that in the man of genius the faculties of the ordinary professional artist and even of the artistic spectator are simply developed more powerfully, more harmoniously, and more completely; that the acknowledged genius in any sphere is a *rarissima avis*, appearing, like some strange comet, only twice or thrice in a century, results from the infrequency of the coincidence of a human organism, very highly perfected in a particular direction, and an environment in which its idiosyncrasy is able to develop freely, not from a supernatural tampering with the fixed order of nature. And, further, it seems hardly consistent to absolve the artist from conformity to those aesthetic norms that are, according to the author, binding for all such as would truly appreciate the work of art he produces.

Dessoir, another and a more redoubtable protagonist of the science of art, by the comprehensiveness and strict scientific accuracy of his work, shares with Lipps and Volkelt the distinction of having shed more light on the intricate problems of aesthetics than any other thinker of the present century. He is, like Volkelt and unlike Lipps, strikingly eclectic in his anxiety to explore thoroughly every nook and cranny of our experience of beauty, and he does not tremble before a plurality of principles; but his scepticism is a trait entirely peculiar to his own philosophical outlook.

We should, for our part, agree wholeheartedly with the general philosophical scepticism he expresses, while dissenting from the sceptical attitude he adopts in regard

to the special problems of aesthetics. The doubting school has played an extremely prominent part in the history of philosophical speculation, from the days of Protagoras and the great Sophists to those of Hume and his eighteenth-century followers, and, in our opinion, there is a kernel of essential truth in the message it brings us from the past.

For all our efforts to secure knowledge of reality, be it philosophical, scientific, or religious, are founded ultimately on a number of basic, quite inevitable and quite unverifiable, assumptions and presuppositions about the reality we are endeavouring to explore. To reason at all we must firmly and steadfastly believe that something, be it mental, material, or neither of these, really and truly exists, that the void is already filled, that pure nothingness is a pure illusion; and this entirely gratuitous assumption is, consciously or unconsciously, concealed behind every form and variety of human judgment and generalization, from that of the child and the common-sense person to that of the scientist and the pure speculative metaphysician. And further, in the sphere of science and philosophy as well as in that of religion, there is the fundamental assumption that we really possess a specific organ for contact with the truth; in science and philosophy this organ is reason, which infers laws about reality by means of immediate experience through the mind or the organs of sense, and invents a new world of verbal symbols to replace the old; while for the mystic and the veritable religious believer there is the white magic of immediate intuition; in the celebrated words of Pascal, "c'est le cœur qui sent Dieu, et non la raison". But whether in fact the key to ultimate reality lies in the heart or in the generalizing intelligence, in the anguish of aspiration for an ideal that the world belies, or in calm, impersonal reflection on the great and tragic pageant of

life, the assumption that either must necessarily prove an organ of ultimate truth is equally fundamental and equally gratuitous; it is not merely the religious devotee but the scientist as well whose knowledge of the universe begins by a *salto mortale*, by an act of pure faith. What a misfortune that Descartes was too good a Catholic to doubt a little more! He might so easily have felt the whole logic of his initial scepticism. The man of science should remember besides, that, as his inferences to be valid should be founded on induction from a vast quantity of individual instances, and as the number of these instances is always incomplete, the great laws of nature and of mind, however absolutely certain they may appear on first view, are at best highly probable.<sup>1</sup>

An immediate corollary of this is that the philosophical intelligence, convinced that final and absolute certainty is quite unobtainable by human effort, will be tolerant in the extreme of divergent opinion, and that fanaticism and dogmatism, whether religious, political, academic, or philosophical, are utterly abhorrent to its hesitating and supremely unprejudiced spirit. In this frame of mind alone can the march of human thought continue uninterrupted and indefatigable; for where a single narrow creed, like the Catholicism of the Middle Ages, or Fascism and Communism in two great contemporary nations, holds undisputed sway over a people or an historical era, there the progress of knowledge is arrested and brought to a temporary standstill, and the ghastly spectre of persecution for belief, and even of religious or proselytizing warfare, appears threateningly on the horizon.

That the various exact sciences which contribute to aesthetics are, in the present state of knowledge, incomplete and sometimes even contradictory, applies with equal force to all the sciences, as anyone who reaches

<sup>1</sup> Russell: *Outline of Philosophy*, pp. 277-286.

their more advanced stages is bound to discover<sup>1</sup>; but this does not oblige us to disregard their simple and elementary principles, such, in psychology, as the laws which govern sensation and association, and it is these that are exploited by the aesthetician. We should, of course, agree that the phenomena of aesthetic experience are extraordinarily varied as between the different psychological types in human nature, and, besides, extraordinarily delicate and fugitive; but the same objection was, no doubt, raised against the pioneers of psychology; and we, the first scientific aestheticians, can feel sufficiently justified by the actual achievement of general psychology to claim that science, when pursued with due patience and tact, is able to illuminate even the obscurest recesses of the mind of man. On these grounds we dissociate ourselves from Dessoir's scepticism in regard to aesthetics as an exact science, while admitting that its conclusions have no more right to absolute and irrefutable certainty than those of any other member of the great family of sciences.

We have already criticized the sharp separation between aesthetics as the philosophy of beauty and art science as the philosophy of art,<sup>2</sup> so that there is no more to say but a few concluding words about the author's attitude to individual problems.

Neither his psychological analysis of the aesthetic impression, nor that of the creative activity, is as detailed and exhaustive as that of Volkelt, while presenting an admirable outline for the solution of these conundrums. We, for our part, are strongly inclined to believe that the creative methods of different artists practising distinct

<sup>1</sup> There is still debate, for instance, between the supporters of the corpuscular hypothesis and those who uphold the wave theory in optics; and in physics the electron has given rise to a very similar controversy.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide supra*, pp. 202, 203.

or even identical arts are extremely varied, and that allowance should be made for these individual peculiarities in artistic production, just as in the parallel case of the appreciation of beauty. Similarly, in studying the artistic personality, the philosopher should not restrict his investigations entirely to the demonic urge of genius, but should also descend to the person of the ordinary talented artist, who usually regards his vocation as the legitimate means of obtaining a secure and reasonable livelihood.

The general outline of his description and explanation of art is brilliant and satisfying, while the special brilliance of the account of music is natural in one who is an expert amateur performer as well as a profound student of the subject. At the same time, it seems to us that the art of the theatre is essentially, save only among primitive peoples, a hybrid, combining as it does both speech and gesture, and not, like the dance, an art of gesture and movement alone. We are, besides, far from contented by the old spatio-temporal division of the arts; for how and by whom can it be said that a picture or a building, that any product of the major or minor plastic arts, does not endure for the definite period we behold it, as well as occupying a particular position before us in space? Yet duration, surely, is one of the outstanding features of time. We would propose instead a two-fold division of the arts that would take account of their aesthetic value as well as their objective and material differences. In the first place, the presence or absence of a practical and utilitarian purpose would give us two large groups, that of the fine arts in which the spirit of beauty is most clearly visible, and that of architecture and the applied arts in which the purest aspirations of the artist are inevitably condemned to subserve material needs. Then, taking into account the different raw materials employed,

we should get the entire collection of individual arts. This would do justice as well to the underlying unity that pervades all the arts, great and small alike, as to their obvious *de facto* differences.

The value of Taine's philosophy of art lies in the importance he attaches to a cognitive element, noted by Volkelt and Stace, the awareness of scientific or moral values, as a feature of art in all its most flourishing and brilliant periods, an importance which demands special emphasis at a time when poetry tends to degenerate into utter incoherence or crude realism, and painting to be transformed into a mere play of abstract forms. There is, besides, an obvious grain of truth in the view that environmental influences leave their trace on even the highest and most original productions. At the same time, the supreme significance of the intellectual element in art, and of external forces in artistic production, are long exploded fallacies.

The aesthetic materialism of Semper, his almost complete neglect of the part played by the individual artistic imagination in artistic creation, which he reduces to the resultant of purely social and mechanical forces, clearly ignores the essence of art, whatever renders it genuinely beautiful to the eye of the artist or the contemplative spectator. But he had the merit to open, by the introduction of an empirical, genetic, and comparative method, which was immediately adopted by a number of eminent thinkers, a new epoch in the philosophical investigation of art; and the objective science of art, which he himself originated by his brilliant study of the plastic arts, is still in the ascendant in continental thought. He has made a definite contribution to our knowledge of certain factors, in themselves aesthetically indifferent, which are universally operative in the production of art, and particularly significant in the case of the minor



arts; he has written, besides, a brilliant chapter on the ancestry of the major arts.

Fiedler is akin to Ruskin in the emphasis he lays on the paramount importance, for the visual artist, of seeing man and nature as they really are; and most thinkers would be at one with him in drawing attention to the moment of construction and fabrication, the time when the artist incorporates his mental vision in a solid material medium. But his view about the supreme importance of the perceptual world clearly applies to painting rather than sculpture and relief, and it neglects entirely the individual imagination of the artist, the warmth of emotion and the love of harmonious design which render the humblest painting infinitely superior to a photographic reproduction, however faithful, of the same scene. His merit is to have laid bare the objective essence of painting as an art, though his intellectualism forbids him to recognize the creative imagination that lends it beauty and life.

It is impossible to be entirely satisfied by Grosse's conception of art as a voluntary and deliberate production of pleasure, a conception that appears very remote from actual experience; he could only have disentangled the psychic energies at work in artistic production from the extraneous and external forces which also affected it, had he, like Hirn, attempted to combine the psychological and ethnological methods. We, for our part, would prefer to define art as those material products of the hand and brain of man that afford delight in contemplation, by reason either of their formal structure or of their spiritual content, or of both in combination. As an artificial and material product it is at once distinct from nature, which is material but not contrived and constructed by man, and from the values of conduct, religion, and true knowledge, which are artificial but purely mental phenomena;

as furnishing delight by means either of its form or of its content,—which include sensuous qualities and design as well as emotional and intellectual significance,—it may easily be distinguished from the useful and the perfect, which even when they are material artefacts, such as economic goods, please only in relation to the specific purpose they have been devised to subserve, and finally, as a source of contemplative, not practical, enjoyment art can never be confused with what is merely agreeable to the senses.

The real excellence of Grosse's work lies in his descent, by means of ethnology and comparative anthropology, to the very cradle of art among uncivilized peoples in every quarter of the globe, and in his description, classification, and analysis of the valuable material there discovered; nevertheless, it is the artistic production of civilized nations, and not the extraordinarily thorny problem of the origins of art or the study of primitive art itself, that provides the most important field for the investigations of the art scientist and the one most likely to yield lasting and positive results.

It is, besides, an outstanding merit of Grosse to have shown clearly and irrefutably that the artistic activity is not purely individual or even purely aesthetic, being influenced at every moment of its development by the social life in which the artist himself is immersed and from which he draws so much of the substance of his work; of course, the further we descend in the scale of human evolution the more prominent and dominant this social influence appears, and the harder it becomes to extract the contribution of the individual artist. While the shedding of new light on the economic factor in the growth of primitive art is a distinct achievement, it would be unjust and inaccurate to style this the most influential of the anaesthetic forces, religious and practical, which

have been operative, and a more balanced view is obtained by comparing with the findings of Grosse on this score those of Hirn and Wundt.

The work of Schmarsow is that of an art critic and historian with a very remarkable understanding of the plastic arts. There is no good reason for supposing that the formal principles of art were derived exclusively from the human body, organic and inorganic objects being equally capable of providing simple geometrical shapes for pattern and design; and further, a genetic division of the arts as different expressions of the human personality is highly factitious, there being no historical evidence whatever for the existence of music and mime prior to that of poetry or of the invention of architecture and sculpture before that of painting.

The real and outstanding merit of this contribution to aesthetic science lies in its grasp of the peculiar and characteristic features of the individual plastic arts; the analysis of sculpture, architecture, relief, painting, and the graphic arts, reveals the nature of each as it exists independently of the artist and of the appreciative spectator, and so marks a distinct advance in the objective science and doctrine of art. But we should maintain that the graphic arts, as exemplified by a great draughtsman like Ingres, are essentially linear, and that they share their representative significance with all the truly representative arts.

Remarkable accuracy of general principle, which is allowed to include both formal and emotional significance, neither being rejected for the sake of unity, combined with a quite exceptional power of applying general views to the detail of individual arts, render Raymond's system of art the most complete and comprehensive that has hitherto appeared in the English language. Its weakness, clearly enough, is to be found on the subjective side;

the objective problem of art is treated with remarkable penetration and exhaustiveness, the subjective and essentially psychological problems of aesthetic contemplation and artistic creation are barely touched. Minor objections arise from the psychological monstrosity of a lightning but entirely unconscious calculation in the awareness of harmony, an unwarranted introduction of conscious thinking into perception, and from the absence, in so detailed a study of the arts, of all but passing reference to the minor or applied arts.

It is just possible that the ten concepts, linked in opposing pairs, which are the fruit of Wölfflin's brilliant study of classical and baroque art, are not as irreducible as the author would have us believe.

The linear or plastic character of the classical masters, who represented a world known to them by the sense of touch and schematic perception, is diametrically opposed to the pictorial character of the baroque and rococo artists who first achieved truth to the optical image, to the world as it actually appears to the eye; but surely realistic insistence on the dimensions of distance and depth, continuity of all spatial forms, the merging of parts within the whole, and of individual people and things in their native surroundings, are natural and inevitable corollaries of the artist's loyalty to visual reality, whereas the rendering of objects by sharp contours and in proud isolation from one another is the reflection in art of an essentially tactual and schematic world.

We cannot accept Worringer's premise that aesthetics is only concerned with the category of the beautiful and with the classical style, which would exclude from the purview of *Einfühlung* the whole of mediaeval art, and his actual psychology of Gothic architecture tends constantly to looseness and obscurity of thought; there is, however, an admirable sketch in his work on this period

of the latent germ of Gothic in the Romanesque period and of its marked influence on the baroque style that arose later from its ashes.

## 2. THE THEORY OF NATURE

Nature includes all such objects, animate or inanimate, as are not the deliberate products of man's inventiveness, whether disinterested and ideal or severely practical in aim; it therefore encompasses the boundless realm of matter as well as the provinces of vegetable and animal life, to the latter of which man himself, as a particular species, belongs. Few people would assert that any corner of nature's domain, however drab and monotonous and unpicturesque it might be, was completely devoid of the faintest trace of beauty, utterly lacking in aesthetic interest to even the most sensitive and alert spectator; for even flat arable or pasture land, broken up into small fields and almost denuded of trees, is not without a certain loveliness when the first shoots of hedge and grass are green in spring or the cornfields ripe for harvesting in autumn, and how often has devastated country, laid waste by the opening of subterranean mines or the erection of great factories, caught the watchful eye of a landscape artist! But fewer still would maintain that some scenes are not richer in beauty, more attractive and arresting for the passer-by, more widely recognized as rare oases of unspoiled loveliness, than others; who seriously challenges the superiority and the irresistible charm, sung through all ages by the poets, of the restless, ever-changing, sea, quiet with the breathless calm of the blue empyrean it mirrors or lashed to a foaming fury by the storm, of solitary mountain peaks with their hoary and everlasting crown of snow, of the dawn that spreads like a vast conflagration from the east and the sun that sinks into the outstretched arms of evening, or of the wide

nocturnal heaven with its multitude of stars and its silver mystery of moonlight? Hence it is that the attention of the philosopher should be focussed primarily on some only of the phenomena of nature, and need not endeavour, to begin with at any rate, to embrace the whole gigantic field in which beauty, however dwindled and diminished in stature, appears outside the confines of art.

But how far, it may be asked, can the beautiful hope to retain its pristine splendour in nature, in a realm where it is manifestly a stranger and an intruder, where mechanical processes and biological strivings reign supreme? That art is its natural home can hardly be questioned, for otherwise men would have had no incentive to produce artificially what they already possessed; and this explains itself directly we realize that works of art fulfil more adequately and more completely than natural objects those external and material conditions on which the experience of beauty depends.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, for instance, the representative arts—which we mean to include music—render only the shadow, the reflection, the representation, of a real world, and so enable us to abstract ourselves from practical preoccupations, to attain a detached and disinterested frame of mind more easily and more immediately than the host of real things, with their intensely utilitarian associations, which surround the path of our ordinary habitual existence. The money value of precious stones, the sanitation of a building, the state of health of a fellow-being, are questions that simply do not arise in the enjoyment of those pictures in which they are depicted. This virtue is not, of course, to be found in architecture or the applied arts, which are not merely representative, because in that

<sup>1</sup> We do not, of course, for a moment pretend that natural beauty—as Lalo professes to believe—should be regarded as dependent on and derived from the beauty of art. *Vide supra*, p. 138.

event they would be incapable of subserving the practical ends for which they are contrived; their superiority lies in a quality they also share with the fine arts, in the fact of being devised consciously and deliberately as an embodiment of beauty.<sup>1</sup> The artist is able, by carefully selecting his medium, his subject, and his manner of expression, to choose the most tense and dramatic situations for representation in the most vivid fashion, and to leave aside entirely the dull, monotonous prose of ordinary life, he is able to create order, harmony, symmetry, proportion where the hand of man or the blind productiveness of nature has left haphazard confusion, he is able, too, by delicate treatment or by complete omission, to guarantee the tranquil mood of contemplation against invasion by terror, cupidity, disgust, or lascivious desire. How often nowadays are even the fairest scenes ruined by some tasteless hoarding or other advertisement, by shapeless bungalows and such-like habitations with no pretensions to any quality save bare utility, by railway lines, wireless and telegraph-poles, or factory chimneys! But to the landscape artist these present no obstacle, for he is perfectly free to choose what he likes and leave the rest to limbo.

So far we have kept in view those peculiar advantages of art which are the source of its superiority, as an embodiment of the beautiful, to nature; but this should not blind us to certain minor privileges enjoyed by nature alone, even though their existence is not likely to induce us, like Ruskin or Fechner, to exalt the purely natural above the artistic. Helmholtz has proved experimentally

<sup>1</sup> This is also the nerve of Hegel's argument for the superiority of art to nature; "nature", whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, is strictly determined and quite lacking in ideal personality, so that the "Idea" must wait for "Mind" before it can assert its real freedom and independence in the sphere of art. *Philosophy of Fine Art*, Vol. I, pp. 160-208.

that the painter has a far narrower tonal range than that presented by the whole gamut of darkness and light, and that he can never hope to emulate, however sombre or brilliant his colouring, the dazzling brightness of sunshine or the soft illumination of moonlight. Not even a Monet or a Whistler has achieved this miracle! Besides, the infinite gradations of tone and colour that compose the light and shade in a landscape remain inevitably unrivalled by even the most skilful artist of the impressionist school. Nor should we forget that nature shows more movement and, in this respect, more animation than art; for natural scenery is never completely immobile, clouds chase one another across the sky, boughs toss or leaves flutter in the wind, waves dance or heave on the surface of the ocean, while, on the other hand, of all the arts only drama and dancing are not stationary and in absolute repose. Again, the colossal size of certain natural phenomena gives them immediate access to the category of the sublime; no palace or cathedral in the world, not even St. Peter's, can vie with the sea, the desert, the open sky, a single mountain peak or a whole range, for sheer extensiveness in space. And lastly, art has hitherto failed signally to make an appeal to the sense of smell; the exquisite perfume of wild and cultivated flowers, so justly celebrated by lyrical poets, the invigorating scent of sweet hay or a peat fire, these are delights that belong exclusively to the garden and the countryside.

The feeling for nature seems to have arisen in the cultural history of man—so far as it is possible to ascertain—at a later period than the feeling for art. Considering the bulk and value of Greek literature, and the artistic brilliance of Athens, the sentiment in question was but poorly developed among a people whose achievement in the dramatic and sculptural arts has been unsurpassed; it is seriously lacking in Homer, even when he refers



to the sea or to the famous garden of Alcinous, and it can hardly be said to enter Greek drama save in the Oedipus at Colonnus and in some of the lyrical choruses of Euripides. Indeed, the continent of nature had to wait for a thorough and minute exploration until the romantic movement of the nineteenth century; Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Goethe, first brought the ocean, the rivers, and the mountain ranges into their own. Now what is the explanation of this tardy development of the feeling for nature? For primitive, uncivilized man, it must be remembered, earth and sea are simply the perennial source of those material goods on which life depends, and mountain peaks are uninteresting and unattractive because they are barren and bleak. Not until the material means of existence became fairly assured, not until some members at least of the social group were released from the primordial task of providing nourishment for themselves and others could this particular avenue to the higher life be opened, and nature, transfigured by an artistic vision, become the object of detached and impersonal contemplation.

A detailed consideration of those natural forms that delight the artistic spectator, of the inexhaustible wonders of earth, and sea, and sky, is a chapter of aesthetics still incomplete. We have already suggested that Ruskin's philosophical importance lies in the adumbration of such a theory. But the progress and development of this branch of aesthetic science will ultimately depend on the descriptive astronomer, meteorologist, geologist, botanist, geographer, and zoologist.

### 3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

The lasting contribution to our subject furnished by the sociological school resides, not in its general theory of art and beauty, but in a patient and detailed

study of the historical relations between art and society; which, of course, is particularly valuable and informative, wherever the ties have been extremely close, as in the humble beginnings of artistic production among the primitive peoples of the earth. There is plenty of scope in aesthetics for an historical examination of the reciprocal influence and causal interaction of art and society, from the dawn of history to the present day, a study that would be primarily concerned with the imprint of social on artistic forms, and this is the right and proper function for a strictly sociological aesthetic; it only fails, like so many other theories, when it attempts to cover the entire field of our experience of the beautiful, and to arrogate to itself the whole of aesthetics, a failure that is particularly ignominious in this case because its final explanation ignores the essence of the experience it sets out to explain.

It is impossible for us to agree, as we have already indicated, either with Lalo's limitation of aesthetics to the philosophy of art or with his hyper-intellectual conception of art itself. There is now ample evidence that the child appreciates the splendour of things before he is even acquainted with their artistic representation, so that the beauty of nature cannot possibly be derived from that of art; to confine aesthetics to the study of art alone will therefore exclude from its scope the entire field of natural beauty.

When we are told that the key to the real nature of the work of art and of its contemplative enjoyment is to be found in the special technique employed by the artist in its production, we can only reply that the author, whatever else he may successfully explain, has failed completely to account for the predominating features of the normal experience of beauty. This fundamental error is the source of the whole shifting of emphasis from the

subjective and psychological to the objective and social aspects of aesthetic experience, an error natural enough in a sociological philosopher.

On the other hand, we should concur with his treatment of aesthetics as "normative", inasmuch as it provides definite laws for the realization of aesthetic values; and besides, with his notion of value in general as relative to human ends rather than absolute, which naturally confers a certain relativity on the norms or canons of art.

Both the psychological and sociological aspects of Hirn's contribution to aesthetics are definitely important. We cannot, however, allow that the artist deliberately aims at securing pleasure for himself, either by means of a cathartic self-expression or by rousing in others the echo of his own emotion; the expression and communication of emotion are themselves an ultimate goal, and delight the unsought crown of achievement.

Further, in spite of his amazing command of recent anthropological and ethnological research, the author does scant justice to the influence of economic and political organizations, and religious cults, on the infancy of art among the primitive peoples of the globe.

Wundt's elaborate study of the art of primitive peoples and of the child will prove of permanent value to aesthetics. We cannot agree with a theory of imagination that engulfs perception and memory in the imaginative process; though the constructive and combining activity is doubtless already operative in memory and even in perception, the difference in degree between these functions and imagination proper is so large that identification becomes quite inadmissible. Another defect is that in a work that deals primarily with art forms the productions of uncivilized peoples should be treated with far greater elaborateness and detail than those of the highest civilization itself.

Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith has made an interesting and original study of an economic factor—"economic fitness"—in the production of the minor arts. H. A. Needham, though to our mind he over-emphasizes the sociological aspect of aesthetics, has written an accurate and complete account of the development of the sociological theory until the end of the last century; it has become so much more important in the present century that his history should certainly be brought up to date.

#### 4. THE THEORY OF FORM

The importance of the theory of form can be estimated by the merest glance at the history of aesthetics, where it figures, again and again, from the Greek era to the present day, receiving specially elaborate and exact application in the hands of two nineteenth-century philosophers, Zimmermann and Herbart.

The ancient formula of unity within a manifold can hardly be bettered as a description of the special structure that any object must possess if it is to satisfy the criterion of formal beauty. The most obvious illustration is perhaps to be found in architecture, sculpture, and painting, but it can be traced as an ingredient of every branch of art as well as in the inorganic substances that nature presents for our delight. The subjective explanation of the enjoyment afforded by the bare form of objects may well be that the underlying unity of a complex whole greatly facilitates the act of perception, which is obstructed both by excessive simplicity and by an incoherent and disorderly agglomeration of things.

That a simplifying and unifying tendency lies at the very root of perception is evident from the function it fulfils in ordinary life, the grouping and ordering of a vast army of sensations so that we ultimately become aware

of a coherent world of complete and isolated objects; but, whereas in common perception the synthetic activity is entirely automatic and unconscious, and, besides, far too habitual to afford the faintest glow of pleasure, in the awareness of lovely forms we consciously and deliberately compare the parts of an object with one another and with the whole to which they individually belong.

Satisfaction of this kind is undeniably a feature of the normal experience of beauty. And its precise importance will vary with the type of mind, emotional or intellectual, possessed by the artist or the artistic spectator, and with the particular art to which he attaches himself; for pattern and design are more obvious and striking in the major and minor plastic arts than they are in music and poetry. But, when the formalists claim, as they frequently do, the sole monopoly of aesthetic theory, we reply that their intransigent intellectualism leaves the quintessence of beauty untouched and unrevealed.

Kant has been rightly regarded as a forerunner of the formalist school, but it should not be forgotten that he transforms the beautiful, towards the end of his *Critique*, into "the symbol of the morally good".<sup>1</sup>

We are not concerned here with the grave epistemological problem envisaged by Souriau, but solely with the aesthetic issues which it raises. He does not appear to us to explain at all what really happens in the creation and contemplation of beauty. Aesthetics cannot be reduced to a science of forms, because aesthetic experience is infinitely wider and deeper than the mere fabrication or enjoyment of symmetry, balance, and proportion; art is not the scientific application of aesthetics because artistic creation is not an entirely voluntary and conscious process, and to identify art and disinterested fabrication is to put pure virtuosity on a level with the highest achieve-

<sup>1</sup> Kant: *Critique of Judgement*, p. 250.

ments of genius. All these errors have their source in a narrow rationalism.

The positive value of this attitude to aesthetics lies in the stress it lays upon form as an essential ingredient in the sphere of beauty, and the programme here drawn up for an aesthetic of the future will not be wholly vain if, under the bizarre headings of pythagorean, dynamic, and skeuological aesthetic, it leads to a scientific collation and classification of natural and artistic forms.

There is the same tendency to one-sided exaggeration in the formalism of such contemporary art critics as Clive Bell, R. Wilenski, and Roger Fry; but the latter, who is also the most distinguished, recognizes the legitimacy of other kinds of aesthetic appreciation, while always reserving the place of honour for balance, composition, and design. There is less consistency about the similar attitude of Herbert Read, who contradicts very flagrantly his original formalistic definitions of art and beauty <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Read: *The Meaning of Art*, p. 7.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE MINOR ARTS

THE forces which mould and determine the character of a lovely Ming vase or an exquisitely graceful Queen Anne chair, of any object of applied or industrial art from the marvels of Ancient Egypt to those of contemporary Sweden, flow in part from the creative imagination of the artist or designer, and in part from a number of external sources—the practical purpose which the object is destined to serve, the nature of the raw material, and of the instruments and technical processes, employed in its fabrication—which impose themselves ineluctably on the spirit of all such as would wed beauty to bare utility.

Hence the fallacy of what Riehl has called the “mechanical” explanation of Semper, who believed that plastic art in its entirety was determined by the utilitarian purpose, real or symbolical, for which the object was intended to serve, by the raw material from which it was fashioned, and by the nature of the instruments and technical processes used in its production.<sup>1</sup>

We should assent rather to the opinion of J. von Falke, who was at pains to distinguish between the practical purpose which moulds the generic form of the object, the nature of the raw material and technical processes entailed in its making, and the artistic idea or purpose which animates the shape, stamps it with proportion or grace, and perhaps embellishes the finished work by means of ornament and colour.<sup>2</sup> The creative imagination of the individual artist constantly endeavours, by affecting the form and outline of the object, to facilitate

<sup>1</sup> G. Semper: *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten*, Bd. I, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> J. von Falke: *Ästhetik des Kunstgewerbes*, pp. 57–62.

Einfühlung<sup>1</sup> as well as to secure pure formal delight. A really beautiful pattern or design, whether woven on a Persian carpet or embroidered on a Bishop's mitre, is full of life and movement, and yet, at the same time, it satisfies perfectly our sense of balance and proportion.

It follows that whatever beauty may present itself in the production of the minor arts is, as a general rule, the fruit of art rather than nature; gold and silver, precious and semi-precious stones, ebony and ivory, these and many other lovely materials have, it is true, a sensuous splendour which owes little or nothing to the hand of the artist, but the slender grace of the jewelled chalice, its exquisite symmetry, the inner life which pours upwards from stem to bowl, these are gifts of shape which only the human spirit can bestow.

We are now in a position to define the minor arts as all such arts as are subservient to any useful or practical purpose save only that of the provision of shelter and accommodation. A division of these applied arts founded on the different materials employed in their production, such as Semper adopted, appears to us distinctly preferable to the genetic or historical division of von Falke, as they did not all succeed one another in a definite chronological order, but tended rather to develop along parallel and individual lines. Thus according as the raw material is flexible, tough, and very resistant to attempts at tearing, or soft, malleable, and capable of hardening, or, on the other hand, elastic, rod-shaped, and relatively firm, we shall have the art of textiles, of ceramics and glassware, and of carpentering; a combination of all three varieties of quality with solidity and the capacity to resist pressure and blows gives metallurgy, for metals are at once malleable, flexible, elastic, and solid.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. Lipps: *Raumästhetik*, pp. 1-60; *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 483-585.

<sup>2</sup> G. Semper: *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten*, Vol. I, pp. 9-12.



Let us now pass on to examine textiles and ceramics in the light of the general principles which govern the genesis of the minor arts, leaving deliberately aside the purely artistic and imaginative factor, which varies little in spite of enormous differences in material and in practical function. The practical purposes which textile wares have been accustomed to serve have been to string together, to tie, to cover, to protect, to close; the raw materials employed in their fabrication have been skin, bark, leather, rubber, lacquer, linen, cotton, wool, silk, and its principal derivatives, satin and velvet; the processes by means of which these have been transformed into articles of daily use are spinning, tying in knots, knitting, plaiting, weaving, embroidering, colouring. The useful purposes fulfilled by pottery, porcelain, and glass, are to hold, to make by using fluid for an ulterior end, to contain as a reservoir, and to pour; also, though of less importance, there are the functions of being a stand or support, a handle, or a lid. The usual raw material of ceramics is alum earth; and the processes by means of which it is transmuted are the mixing of the plastic mass, its moulding in a definite shape, its coating with varnish or clay together with decoration by colour or paint, and lastly, the hardening and baking of the object that has already acquired its final shape.

Semper has written besides a complete history of the minor arts, and of their important influence on the development of architectural styles; starting, in the case of textiles, from the products of such primitive peoples as the Maoris and Polynesians, in the case of the remainder from the earliest discoveries of archaeologists, and concluding with the wonders of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance, and the superb creations of the modern era. This is far fuller than the historical sketch of von Falke, who confines his investigations to the civilized era and does not attempt to descend to origins.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### GENETIC AESTHETIC

#### I. THE ORIGINS OF ART

When and how did beauty first spring into existence? At what moment in the past history of our globe, under what special circumstances and conditions of social structure and physical environment, and in what elementary forms, did the latent germ of art unfold itself amid the coarse instincts and elemental passions of a mind absorbed in the contemplation or fabrication of material things? Such are the various aspects of the one great problem of the origins of art and beauty. It is manifestly impossible, within the limits of recorded and accessible past events, to give an absolutely precise historical, chronological, and psychological answer to the questions we have asked; we shall be able at most, when we have discovered and studied all that survives of the earliest artistic productions, to hazard a conjecture as to the motives which prompted their construction and to decide for certain at what particular epoch in prehistory beauty first dawned on the universe.

The unique data for our search, then, consist of solid material objects, actual works of fine or applied art, the earliest offsprings of that artistic spirit which first moved in living beings. But this immediately limits the field of our investigations to human history; for those productions of the lower animals which most nearly resemble works of fine art—the songs and nests of certain birds, the marvellously proportioned dwellings of some ants and bees—are the fruit of strictly practical interests which have happened, without any deliberate intention, like the formation of a crystal or a snowflake, to

coincide with beauty of structure, shape, and form. Besides, if the constructive urge here manifest was in reality similar to the creative activity of man, we should legitimately expect to find it yet more marked among those animals to which he is most closely related; but, in point of fact, there is among the higher apes no trace whatever of anything that might be legitimately called artistic production. We are entitled, without hesitation, to echo the proud words of Schiller, "Die Kunst, O Mensch, hast du allein".

But the field of our investigations demands yet narrower delimitation; for we must reject altogether the embryonic art of the child, partly because biologists have undermined the belief that ontogenesis exactly recapitulates phylogenesis, and partly because the environment of the child, which includes a vast number of civilizing influences and excludes warfare, magic, and tabus, is so absolutely different from that of the savage, and confine our researches exclusively to those artistic productions of primitive and prehistoric peoples with which ethnologists, anthropologists, and prehistorians have made us acquainted in recent years. Now an important caveat should be registered before we exploit primitive art in this way. We cannot suppose that, when all things mortal have been touched by the hand of change, primitive peoples should have alone remained completely stationary and motionless during thousands of years. It appears highly probable, indeed, that the comparatively unprogressive societies of the present day are only the weak and degenerate descendants of those Stone and Metal Age peoples from whose vigorous youth civilization ultimately sprang.

We are thus left with only one perfectly reliable source of evidence, prehistory; but, alas, the music, poetry, and elaborate dances of prehistoric peoples have vanished for

ever, and we are only acquainted with those few, paltry fragments of their plastic arts which have been sufficiently durable to survive the ravages of time! This rapid survey of all the available data suffices to make clear that, in the present state of knowledge, any conclusion about the origins of art is hypothetical in the extreme, and, further, that we are never likely to obtain in this sphere the degree of certainty demanded by exact science, and available for the other enquiries pursued by aesthetics.

We have already indicated that we know most about the early stages of the plastic arts. The primordial artistic activity of palaeolithic man appears to have been, according to Hoernes, Woermann, and Grosse, the invention of one of the minor arts, of decorative art, the ornamentation of his own body by scarification, painting, tattooing, or the wearing of crude adornments. This was ulterior even to the polishing and stylization of flint weapons and instruments of use, and may easily have been the outcome of the savage's desire to enhance his own self-importance or to attract to himself the opposite sex. But the recent discovery of wonderful realistic drawings and paintings of wild beasts on various cave walls in France and Spain, and of human figures carved in ivory or stone, shows convincingly that the major plastic arts were also alive and flourishing in the palaeolithic era.

It seems likely that the simple and regular patterns of primitive decoration were borrowed from the technique of plaiting and spinning and from certain animal, vegetable, and inorganic forms; such elementary designs as the spiral, the zig-zag, the square, the circle, and the triangle, were probably transferred to art from nature and from the construction of useful objects.<sup>1</sup> But there is no reason to suppose that the intervention of individual imagination did not raise these decorative principles above pure

<sup>1</sup> K. Woermann: *Geschichte der Kunst*, Bd. I, pp. 6-48.

imitation at a very early stage in their application. The major art of architecture is, however, a considerably later development; the well-proportioned hut or grave of the neolithic period is the first indication that man would transform his habitat from a rude shelter against the forces of nature into a magnificent work of art. The mural decoration which naturally followed the ornamentation of weapons and instruments of use, no doubt contributed powerfully to the emancipation of the dwelling-house.

The dance, in its original form of the ecstatic dance, was probably no more than a release of violent emotions by means of the frenzied bodily movements of the individual; not till much later, when disciplined by rhythmic and ordered motions, organized as the collective expression of a religious or magical cult, and embellished by the fine trappings of word and sound, did it come to reign supreme among the arts of primitive man.

The ancient and attractive belief, held even by Grosse and Wundt, that music and poetry were the rare progeny of the dance has been completely undermined by the most recent anthropological research. Stumpf has insisted, in a brilliant essay, that the real origins of music are not to be found either in ordinary language suffused with emotion, as Rousseau, Herder, and Herbert Spencer had supposed, or in the rhythm of bodily movements in the dance or at work, which was the alternative explanation offered by Wallaschek and Bücher, for neither impassioned language nor rhythm alone could possibly give rise to those simple and definite tonal relations which constitute the essence of this art. For music is essentially the production of tones separated by fixed and definite intervals, and these being independent of pitch can be transposed without the slightest alteration. Both vocal and instrumental music—the former preceding the latter—are more probably derived from the action of signalling

to people at a distance, when the different registers would use very simple intervals in order to blend together in one shout; this purely utilitarian activity was the most likely source of the three ingredients of primitive music, melody, rhythm, and the rudiments of harmony.<sup>1</sup> But while granting that the tonal relations on which melody and harmony depend may have arisen as Stumpf suggests, and cannot possibly have been produced by speech, which does not even furnish the steady pitch presupposed by definite intervals, or by rhythmic bodily movements alone, there seems no good reason to reject practical activities involving a marked rhythm, such as ordinary manual labour and the primitive dance, as contributory sources of this particular factor in music.

The earliest lyrical utterances of primitive peoples, always inseparable from gesture and sound, were meaningless words, pure nonsense, sung at a tribal dance to relieve the ecstatic joy of a hearty meal or success in the chase. But not until words were used deliberately to describe the passions which consumed the bard, not until they acquired a precise and definite meaning, did poetry become capable of refinement and progressive development towards the expression of individual emotion; it is in the lyrical interjection that we find the germ of all higher lyrical forms, in the bitter cry of unsatisfied hunger and of craving for nourishment, and, later, in the bald utterance of burning sexual desire and the hopeless lament for the dead.<sup>2</sup>

Such are the various ways in which primitive man first discovered a verbal and imaginative outlet for his deepest joys and sorrows, and a momentary if partial satisfaction for the endless torment of his instinctive longings; and it should be observed that the greatest single step in the

<sup>1</sup> C. Stumpf: *Die Anfänge der Musik*, pp. 7-34.

<sup>2</sup> H. Werner: *Die Ursprünge der Lyrik*, pp. 8-281.

upward growth of poetry, the introduction of the lyrical interjection, occurred in complete independence of the tribal dance. Narrative and dramatic poetry were probably later developments, the former starting perhaps as a description of present events which some savages desired to communicate to others, the latter originating from the mimic animal dance, when words had been added and the rhythmic gestures of the players deliberately omitted. The dance as a rite in a religious as distinct from a magical cult, which we find to be the germ of Greek drama, was the more recent invention of a people at a higher cultural level. The intermediate stages between the pure mimic dance and true imaginative drama were marked by exact and literal mimicry, and, later, by the mythological or religious mime.

What conclusions are we entitled to draw from this broad survey of all the most primitive art forms? We may well believe that the common ingredients of the mental states of primitive man were suddenly combined and ordered in an entirely unique and novel fashion, and that this spontaneous rearrangement gave birth to the act of artistic production and the attitude of aesthetic contemplation. The moment men were released from the vulgar toil of preserving and reproducing their kind, in the first respite from the bare struggle for existence, the latent germ burst into flower and man became something higher and nobler than the other animals.

We cannot accept any single explanation like the play theory of Spencer, or its more recent version in the hands of Verworn, who asserts that the common origin of plastic art in the palaeolithic period lay in the impulse to play with practical technique, nor can we derive art with Darwin from the sexual impulse, for either hypothesis would exclude the other practical activities and functions which appear equally to have contributed to its origin.

There can, of course, be no doubt at all that such heterogeneous features as strictly utilitarian purposes, and play, and ritual, and hunger, and sexual desire, are everywhere stamped upon and mingled with the most primitive art forms, and that only in civilized societies has art achieved complete autonomy and lasting emancipation from material needs; but the aesthetic attitude is the result of the unfolding of our entire lower life, rather than the product of some unique and innate art instinct or spirit of beauty in the human soul.

We cannot claim, after an impartial survey of our data, that all the arts have sprung from any one of their number, such as the tribal dance; available evidence, indeed, points with overwhelming strength to the independent origin and separate discovery of each,—with the exception of the drama—while allowing us to emphasize the intimate relationship between music, poetry, and the dance by drawing attention to the fusion of sound, word, and gesture in the self-expression of primitive man, and to the unspecialized and little differentiated character of his entire existence as a social and individual being.

## 2. PREHISTORIC AND PRIMITIVE ART

As contemporary primitive peoples are the sole survivors, the unique witnesses, of society as it existed in the prehistoric period, being the result of evolutionary development abruptly and suddenly arrested, there is a certain parallelism—extremely rough, it must be admitted—between the social life and the artistic activity of primitive and of prehistoric man; it would appear, for example, that the Australian aborigines, the South African Bushmen, and the Eskimos, correspond approximately to the fishing and hunting peoples of the old Stone Age, the inhabitants of the Pacific Islands—the Melanesians, Micronesians, Polynesians—and the Indians of



North and South America to the agricultural peoples of the new Stone Age, while the African negroes and the inhabitants of Malaya are the survivors of the once flourishing peoples of the various Metal Ages. Thus the naturalism of the palaeolithic era is repeated in the art of primitive hunting peoples, and the geometrical style of the neolithic era is found again in the work of those primitive peoples who live by agriculture and cultivating the soil.<sup>1</sup> This rough and inexact parallelism should be sufficient justification for the treatment in one chapter of the artistic productions of both primitive and prehistoric peoples.

The only traces of his work left us by the prehistoric artist belong to the realm of plastic art. The three long periods in which distinct evidence of prehistoric artistic inventiveness has come to light in Europe are the second half of the palaeolithic era—the age of hunting and fishing peoples and of naturalism in art—the period which extends from the beginning of the neolithic era until the end of the Iron Age,—in which agricultural peoples first discovered an abstract, geometrical art—and, lastly, the hesitating synthesis of naturalism and formalism by the warrior peoples of the later Metal Ages, when animals were first domesticated, and the supreme achievements of civilized art clearly foreshadowed.<sup>2</sup>

During the naturalistic period the representation of men or animals exquisitely drawn or painted on cave walls, or sculpted more clumsily in ivory and stone, predominates over pure abstract ornamentation, while in the succeeding period the situation is exactly reversed. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the neolithic artist profited from the errors of his palaeolithic predecessor to create a new style, for he was completely unacquainted with the artistic productions of the earlier

<sup>1</sup> K. Woermann: *Geschichte der Kunst*, Bd. II, pp. 1–68.

<sup>2</sup> M. Hoernes: *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa*, pp. 104–115.

period; *mater sine prole defuncta*. A feature common to the entire realm of prehistoric art is the monotonous rigidity and simplicity of its forms, the same figures and the same designs are repeated over and over again, without deterioration but without improvement, throughout thousands of years. There is no evidence at all, once a certain limited facility had been acquired, for the presence of real imagination and inventiveness in the primitive soul. The bulk of prehistoric art is, according to Hoernes, purely secular and mundane in origin, the spontaneous fruit of the leisure moments of our prehistoric ancestors; he will only allow the stone figures, the idols, of the neolithic epoch to be explained as the product of a religious or magical cult.<sup>1</sup> The realistic style of the first period clearly bears the stamp of a mind haunted by a detailed vision of every incident in the chase, and the simple geometrical patterns of the second period probably owe their origin to a stylized imitation of nature and of ordinary technical processes.

Among contemporary primitive peoples we first catch a glimpse of the entire field of art. The value and interest of Wundt's doctrine of art lies in the use he has made of anthropological investigations among the primitives. He starts by a genetic division of the arts into two great classes, the "plastic" and the "musical" arts. The former find their material in nature, animating and creating it anew, the latter, on the other hand, express subjective emotions in vocal sounds or rhythmic movements of the human body or in the sounds and movements of such objects as are copied from the human organs of speech and movement. Take, first, the "plastic" arts. In an evolutionary and genetic order we find momentary art,—the drawing on the sand or piece of bark—and an enduring art of recollection—human or animal idols—

<sup>1</sup> M. Hoernes: *Urgeschichte der bildenden Kunst in Europa*, pp. 185–191.

alike subservient to purely practical purposes, ornamentation and the imitation of nature which are sometimes free, and, finally, ideal art, the art of civilization wherein imitation and memory are subordinate to the free creative imagination of the artist, who realizes the subjective ideas stirred in him by external impressions. The minor art of decoration chooses the human body as its first object and then transfers itself to ceramics, attire, and articles of ordinary use. The fundamental constituents of these plastic arts as a whole are the visual image and the abstract design or pure ornament.<sup>1</sup> They give together the representative ornament.

The "musical" arts are then treated in a similar fashion. Though we have no certain evidence of their historical origin, it is psychologically probable, Wundt believes, that dance, music, and song were in the beginning united, as we actually find them to-day in the tribal dances of primitive peoples. The earliest lyrical form, the song, is found in the exclamatory song, the ritual song, and the song sung while at work; narrative prose appears successively as the fairy tale and animal fable, as the epic, and, in modern times, as the short story and the novel; the two earliest dance forms were the individualistic ecstatic dance and the collective and magical mimic dance, which included sowing, harvest, war, and hunting dances; instrumental music was first a rhythmic accompaniment for primitive dancers, fixed scales were the product of magical numbers, and music in its entirety developed from homophony to polyphony, and thence to harmony; the germ of the drama lies in the mimic dance, which, when speech was introduced, became the purely imitative mythological, burlesque, and religious mime (of this the mediaeval stage is a recent example), these leading in turn, with the first spark of individual

<sup>1</sup> W. Wundt: *Völkerpsychologie*, Bd. III, pp. 110-336.

imagination, to ancient and modern tragedy, comedy, and drama.<sup>1</sup>

The aesthetic materialism of Grosse sheds new light on the importance of economic forces to the development of primitive art among hunting and fishing peoples. For the influence of the economic factor, of the manner of winning a livelihood,—and not, as Taine had believed, racial and climatic influences—entirely predominates, according to him, in this sphere; whenever primitive peoples have lived by hunting animals, however much they may have differed in race and however far they may have been separated in space—certain tribes of American Indians, the Eskimos, the Bushmen, the Australian aborigines—their various arts, in their outstanding themes and forms, have borne a striking and fundamental resemblance.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for instance, in the plastic arts of these peoples there is a remarkable realism in the representation of men and animals, and their decorative designs are always borrowed from human and animal figures or from the technique of textiles, never from plants. Like Wundt, he derives poetry and music from the gymnastic or mimetic dance, which was always accompanied by sound and words, and so led naturally to the development of vocal and instrumental music and to the fragments of lyrical, narrative, and dramatic poetry which has survived by oral tradition to the present.

The survey of Y. Hirn is far more catholic than that of Grosse, covering a wider field of primitive art and stressing the significance of other heterogeneous motives besides the purely economic. He draws attention, in fact, to a large number of practical and collective motives, themselves quite anaesthetic, which have been respon-

<sup>1</sup> W. Wundt: *Völkerpsychologie*, Bd. III, pp. 367–608.

<sup>2</sup> E. Grosse: *The Beginnings of Art*, p. 310.

sible in the past for the production of works of art by primitive peoples. Thus, for example, primitive art is often the means of conveying information; either, in the place of speech, it communicates by way of mimic dance, song, narrative poem, drawing on cloth, bark, or sand, news about important events in the present, or, performing a commemorative function, it perpetuates by means of dance, narrative, or sculpted figure, the memory of really outstanding persons and events. The sexual impulse has been responsible, in certain instances, for dance, song, and lyrical effusion, but we cannot go so far as to accept it, with Darwin, as the progenitor of art in general. The rhythm of song and dance has been deliberately adopted to facilitate the ordinary work of an individual or a group of individuals, and war has been responsible for those varieties of dance and personal adornment which serve either to stimulate bravery, or to terrify an enemy, or to impart and implant military discipline. And lastly, that kind of sympathetic magic which is based on the principle of association by similarity and claims to act on a person or thing by means of another which resembles it, has given birth to mimic dances depicting climatic conditions, to volts,—the drawn or sculpted images of men and women—and to the descriptive incantations of witch doctors and sorcerers.<sup>1</sup>

What general conclusions are we entitled to draw from the abundant evidence furnished us by ethnology and anthropology for the understanding of primitive art? In the first place, it appears everywhere confused, intermingled, and dominated by severely practical motives, individual or collective, by an absorbing passion for the preservation and perpetuation of the individual or of the species to which he belongs; play, sexual desire, hunger and thirst, warfare, magic rites, ordinary work,

<sup>1</sup> Y. Hirn: *The Origins of Art*, pp. 149-297.

manner of livelihood, communication and commemoration of ideas and events, these have all contributed, to a greater or lesser degree, to the development of the artistic activity and left their indelible stamp on its productions. Primitive art is always useful, applied art, practical in its origin and practical in its function, and it fails altogether to achieve the freedom from biological interests that pertains to all the fine arts among civilized peoples. At this stage in his evolution, man is still immersed in the terrible struggle for existence, waged continuously against climatic and geographical conditions, against wild animals, and against his fellow creatures, and this leaves him little surplus energy to devote to such disinterested pursuits as art, knowledge, or religion; hence the almost complete absence from primitive society of specialization, the predominance of practical motives of one kind or another, and the non-existence of the professional artist and of art as a distinct and independent function or a vocation apart from others. An immediate corollary is the lack of complexity and variety in the products of the primitive artist. An astonishing lack of imagination and inventiveness is displayed in the monotonous repetition of the same theme, handled in the same way, by generations of anonymous artists; and the short and simple melody or lyrical composition of the savage is a striking and vivid contrast to the vast and complex masterpieces of a Shakespeare or a Beethoven.

But there is yet another wide and unbridged chasm between primitive and civilized art. Like the religious life and worship of a primitive community, its artistic activity is, broadly speaking, a communal or collective rather than an individual function, it is the fruit of the common labour which occupies all its mature members, or of the common magical rites celebrated by the entire community, or of the common military discipline and

tactics of the whole tribe; whereas modern art is, on the contrary, essentially and inevitably individualistic, it reveals to us always the temperament and the personality of some individual artist who lends the finished work of art whatever beauty it may possess, and, in its supreme manifestations, in the work of genius, becomes inaccessible save only to those few who have been blessed by a superior talent and the proper facilities for the cultivation of their artistic disposition; the ever solitary genius, the isolated peak in which humanity culminates, misunderstood and neglected by his contemporaries and never understood by the crowd, calls to his kin across the gulf of centuries. Primitive art is as essentially an anonymous and social product as the art of ancient Greece or modern Europe is the product of the independent travail of separate individual artists. It belongs as exclusively to the people as modern art, in its highest achievements, does to an élite.

### 3. THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE OF THE CHILD

The extraordinary imaginativeness of children has always given the poets, and specially the Romantic poets, a sense of kinship with the child; not the minutest detail of a fairy-tale may be changed with impunity on repetition, and the ordinary condescending grown-up rarely grasps the profound seriousness of a game of Red Indians or putting dolly to bed. The child, like the primitive man, is a supreme egoist, a kind of unconscious solipsist, confounding reality and his own dreams, the inanimate and his living self, his names for things and the actual objects they are used to designate. Now this imaginative faculty, when developed sufficiently to embody itself in little works of art or to animate and transform the external world, is, we believe, the most characteristic feature of the child's experience of the beautiful.

For Lascaris, as for Sully,<sup>1</sup> the imaginative inventive-ness of the child is simply a form of its play, a significant offshoot of the play impulse; for the play activity includes in itself the whole of his normal, active life, and should therefore be opposed, not to serious work, but to the exercise of organic functions, to sleep, and inaction.<sup>2</sup> To this we should answer for our part that the term "play" has been given an illegitimately broad connotation. It would appear rather, as Wundt urges, that the artistic activity of the child, though it may emerge and issue from his play, is distinguished sharply from this by its greater imaginative power, both traditional and invented games being, on the whole, purely imitative. The imaginative play of the child not seldom attains the level of art and does not lack in itself elements of creativeness, while the primitive art of the savage can fall to a mere play activity, which has nothing at all in common with the higher productions of the artistic spirit.<sup>3</sup> Already, in the years of childhood and infancy, we may observe with certitude the difference between art and play.

When we compare the imagination of the child with that of the mature and professional artist, a startling disparity immediately impresses itself upon us; for, as Lascaris tells us, there is a complete indeterminateness—"non-spécificité"—about his inventive processes, an abundance of images of all sorts and kinds that is entirely lacking to the one-sided and specialized imagination of the ordinary artist; a child, like his ancestor the savage, is a tyro in all the arts at once, not content with dancing, singing, and telling stories, he builds sand castles and scribbles delightfully absurd figures with a stump of pencil. But if the imagination of the child is diffuse and

<sup>1</sup> J. Sully: *Studies in Childhood*, pp. 298-330.

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Lascaris: *L'Education Esthétique de l'Enfant*, pp. 88, 89.

<sup>3</sup> W. Wundt: *Völkerpsychologie*, Bd. III, pp. 75-101.



indeterminate as compared with that of the mature artist, it is also less imaginative, less fertile, less inventive. For the power of dissociating images and grouping them again in novel combinations is very feebly developed indeed, and it is only the poverty of the images themselves that checks the realism of his native tendency to imitation. The triumph of imagination over pure imitation, of production over reproduction, is, in the life of the average child, little better than a Pyrrhic victory.

His aesthetic experience as a whole presents, like that of the adult, an appreciative and a creative aspect; but, though one supposes that enjoyment of a simple physiological order, such as delight in the dancing brightness of a sunbeam or in the vivid colouring of a dress or toy, signals the dawn of the sense of beauty in the child mind, there can be little doubt that an innate disposition towards motor activity, and the natural tendency to react suddenly and violently to stimuli, render the creative activity far more pronounced in childhood than mere passive appreciation. The child, like the primitive and unlike the civilized man, is essentially a maker rather than a spectator.

Nevertheless, he is by no means untouched and undisturbed by the moving spectacle of art and nature. He humanizes persistently the organic and inorganic, and tends to pass from mere animation to belief in the real existence of anthropomorphic agencies and beings; this attitude to nature is entirely spontaneous, appearing as it does in the earliest years of childhood, and so cannot be explained, as some would have it, by an intimate previous acquaintance with landscape paintings.

The methods of experimental psychology have been used with considerable success to test the child's fondness for artistic products. Lascaris has studied ninety-six school-children of both sexes between the ages of six and twelve,

confronting them with colours, simple geometrical forms, and coloured representations of people and things. Preference, she found, was determined by a variety of different motives; the immediate, sensuous factor—visual or tactile—accounted primarily for the appeal of brilliant, saturated colours, association and *Einfühlung* awarded the prize to certain geometrical figures, while the subject and colour attracted most interest in pictures.<sup>1</sup> C. W. Valentine has reported some interesting results from the observation of his own child's reactions, aged 3½, to colours. Brilliant shades at a high degree of saturation were uniformly preferred to duller tints, owing, probably, to the more intense physiological stimulation they produced; the infant's liking for various colours expressed as that percentage of the total time of exposure during which his attention remained fixed on the object, showed yellow 80 per cent., white 74 per cent., pink 72 per cent., red 45 per cent., brown 37 per cent., black 35 per cent., blue 39 per cent., green 28 per cent., violet 9 per cent. At school the order of choice is already different, having been modified by associations with past experience.<sup>2</sup> At present these experiments have been conducted on too small a scale to warrant any final generalization. But, in the hands of the child lover, they promise results of the very deepest interest, always assuming that our friend is caught before his natural reactions to simple colours and forms have had time to be vitiated by his past experience.

The literary appreciation of the child traverses three successive stages. First, there is a period of nursery stories, such as Shock-headed Peter, related by the nurse or mother, and immediately connected with his everyday life and doings; then follows a period of fairy-tales, such

<sup>1</sup> P. A. Lascaris: *L'Education Esthétique de l'Enfant*, pp. 318–350.

<sup>2</sup> C. W. Valentine: *The Experimental Psychology of Beauty*, pp. 13–16.

as the marvellous fantasies of Hans Andersen and Grimm, very remote from ordinary, everyday life, and wholly unconnected with the person of the child; and lastly, a period of crude realism, almost of naturalism, during which the small boy revels in the dare-devil adventures of cowboys, pirates, and Red Indians. The child's imagination in the fairy-tale phase is characterized by a rapid and varied, almost kaleidoscopic alternation of images, quite regardless of psychological probability or causal laws; it is also marked by crass exaggeration, manifest in a plethora of extremes in the description of mental and material qualities, by great detail and vividness of individual images, and by a poverty of association by similarity evident in the absence of constructive imagination and of all but the most obvious similes and metaphors.<sup>1</sup>

The one creative activity of the child which has already been studied fairly thoroughly and conclusively, the drawing and modelling of figures, lies in the sphere of plastic art. This is less surprising than it might appear at first blush when we recollect that a drawn figure is something permanent and lasting, that it endures beyond the moment, and can therefore be easily collected and recorded; whereas the dance that springs from a sudden fit of exuberance, the creepy tale told in the twilight, the tune hummed quietly in a corner, live and die like the spurt of a match in the dark. It is for parents, pedagogues, and those happy mortals who win the confidence of children, to mend these torn meshes in the net of knowledge.

Already in childhood there is an evolution and a development, a real progress in the growth of artistic talent. The dance begins as a spontaneous explosion of strong emotion, and soon becomes a deliberate imitation of people or domestic animals; song, starting from the

<sup>1</sup> K. Bühler: *Die geistige Entwicklung des Kindes*, pp. 335-358.

simple melody of babble, grows into more complex melodies which are crooned to words; dramatic games are both pantomimic and literary, they always involve deliberate imitation, sometimes by gesture and movement alone, and sometimes, with greater realism, by these plus a spoken dialogue; the brief poetic utterance of one or two lines culminates in entire narratives and poems of considerable length. The applied arts are also familiar to the child, who is an amateur architect, constructing buildings of many sorts and kinds, a gardener, and sometimes a fabricator of his own toys.

But we know our friend best as a pure plastic artist, as a modeller of clay figures and a draughtsman. And at this point we must draw a firm dividing line between the ordinary, normal, philistine child, who has no prospect and no desire of becoming a professional artist, and a really talented child who shows from earliest youth a leaning towards art or an abnormal technical facility. We are at present, unfortunately, only able to trace their separate paths in the sphere of plastic art. Let us start with the normal child.

His development as a draughtsman, following the brilliant analysis of Wulff, traverses an initial and introductory phase and, subsequently, three more successive stages. The introductory period of the scribble and scrawl, without any attempt whatever at representation, is quite involuntary, regular movements of arm, hand, and fingers which govern the whole process being the natural and inevitable product of rhythmic bodily impulses. Later, thanks to the perception of an accidental resemblance between his scrawl and the outlines of the human body, he begins a deliberate but highly schematic representation of his immediate environment, ignoring conscientiously all detail, perspective, and exact proportion.

Now how can we account for the abstractness and absence of realism in all these drawings? According to Sully, Bühler, and Dessoir, it occurs because the child's hand is guided in its movements by his verbal knowledge of things, by an inexact general description, and not by a clear and distinct image of the object he desires to represent. This explanation, however, credits the youthful draughtsman with the developed mentality of the mature person, who, certainly, thinks in terms of words and symbols rather than in terms of concrete images. It appears far more probable that he is not so intellectual as this, that he really and truly imagines, though by means of certain peculiar visual images, singularly imperfect, schematic, and devoid of detail, as compared with the full-blooded image of perception. His guiding light is, in fact, twofold, consisting of the orthoscopic image, flat and perpendicular to the line of vision,—“die Sehform”—and, in addition, of a plastic, three-dimensional image,—“die Schvorstellung”—which either co-operates harmoniously with its two-dimensional brother or, hopelessly confusing the child's mind, produces those curious but common figures in which profile and full-face views are combined.

The gradual filling-in of these bare and schematic visual images leads, between the ages of ten and fourteen, to the last stage in the natural and spontaneous development of the child draughtsman, to realistic representation; now detailed attention is first paid to clothes, to movements, to the different members of the body and their relation to one another. Beyond this he cannot go without tuition. The final stage of completely realistic representation is never attained without expert guidance at home or in the art school, where, first, the wonders of linear and aerial perspective and chiaroscuro, and the subtleties of anatomical structure, are revealed to his enquiring mind.

Before the influence of parents and teachers has exerted itself on the child he always draws from memory, never from nature, resembling closely in this respect the habit of his prehistoric ancestors; and his natural circle of interests is extremely narrow, limiting his repertory at first to human beings, then extending it to men and animals, usually domestic, and only allowing it later to include the trees, flowers, houses, and useful objects of his immediate environment.

The modelling of clay figures by the child falls into three main periods. In the first of these, which corresponds to the scribble stage in drawing, the clay is fashioned into flat or cylindrical lumps by a spontaneous motor activity; in the second a vague outline of the object is reproduced, while the detail and proportion of its parts are neglected; the third, on the other hand, is eminently realistic, wealth of detail, accurate proportions, the portrayal of moods and states of feeling, making a simultaneous appearance. The psychological explanation of the whole activity is highly complex, but it issues from three principal sources. According as the orthoscopic or the plastic image predominates, the tendency will be to represent figures in relief or in complete, three-dimensional plasticity, while in either case the recollection of tactile and muscular sensations, alone operative in the case of the congenitally blind artist, facilitates the portrayal of men and animals both in motion and at rest.

It is now time to turn our attention to the abnormal and gifted child. Is he really, as Hartlaub and Bühler have maintained, a kind of monster, a complete anomaly, able to skip the phase of schematic representation? The support for this view has completely collapsed since more recent observers have discovered schematic sketches in the development of obviously talented children. The real difference between talent and normality appears to be

one of degree rather than kind; for the talented child progresses more rapidly than his less fortunate brethren, attaining, for instance, the first realistic stage at the precocious age of six, by which time he has traversed all the intervening periods; he is also more versatile, a number of different mental and physical traits pertaining to artistic production being simultaneously possessed by him; then his graphic and pictorial faculties are more highly and delicately developed, and according as this hypertrophy affects the orthoscopic visual memory, or the memory of colours and relations of tone, with their corresponding sensory centres and sense organs, a distinct gift for the silhouette, for plastic modelling in three-dimensions, or for depicting light and colour by means of pigments, will inevitably assert itself.

But hitherto, though the gifted child has shown distinct superiority to the normal in technical ability, we have detected no specifically artistic difference between them. This resides essentially in a higher degree of imagination, in production as distinct from mere reproduction, in creation as distinct from slavish imitation, and those in whom this rare trait appears are the born artists of their generation. They manifest a strong tendency either to stylize in the direction of symmetry and proportion, from which ornamental and decorative designers eventually emerge, or to modify the surface appearance of objects so as to render them visibly expressive of their inner life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> O. Wulff: *Die Kunst des Kindes*, pp. 1-116; M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 276-282.

## CHAPTER XIX

### SOME AESTHETIC CATEGORIES

THE so-called "aesthetic categories", or "modifications of the aesthetic", represent certain important and distinct aspects of our experience of the beautiful, which, however, lack the supreme generality of a great explanatory principle; they are therefore to a certain extent an afterthought, a side issue for the philosopher who is exploring the domain of beauty, and have a status very similar to that of subordinate concepts in a natural science, such as the various individual species of a higher biological genus. We shall concern ourselves in these pages only with the most outstanding and significant of these categories, leaving aside such minor classes as the romantic, the classical, the pretty, the lyrical, the dramatic, or the pathetic, and directing all our attention to the comic, the tragic, the beautiful, the ugly, and the sublime; our starting-point in each case will be a rough historical sketch of their treatment and handling by some eminent aestheticians, mostly modern, and we shall conclude with a criticism of their views in the light of what we believe to be the real and substantial truth. Aestheticians have frequently amused themselves by arranging the categories in exactly symmetrical pairs, the sublime opposite the comic, the ugly facing the beautiful, and so on, like so many partners in the lancers; but in our opinion no one of these modifications is the exact opposite and anti-thesis of any other, so that we shall content ourselves by noting their resemblances and differences as we come to them.



## 1. THE SUBLIME

Reflection on the emotion of the sublime can be traced as far back as an anonymous treatise of the first century, the “περι ὕψους”; though the author’s definition of sublimity as “the echo of a great soul”, “μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀπήχημα”,<sup>1</sup> is too vague to be more than suggestive; that he had really experienced this aspect of the beautiful can be judged from the examples he uses, such as the ocean, the Nile, the Danube, and the Rhine. Burke, in his famous essay, discloses a far subtler and more penetrating analysis of the experience in question; for him the emotion of the sublime, in contradistinction to that of beauty, is derived from the self-preservative impulses, and resides in a feeling of terror, and therefore, to some extent, of discomfort and pain, arising at a moment when there is no real danger to life or limb.<sup>2</sup> Objects that succeed in rousing this peculiar emotion possess such qualities as immense power, vast size, or infinity.

Ruskin, on the other hand, dismisses summarily terror and suffering from the experience of the sublime and conceives it to be “the effect of greatness on the feelings; —greatness, whether of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty”.<sup>3</sup> Such also is the opinion of James Sully, for whom the feeling of sublimity is that peculiar emotion excited by the presentation or ideal suggestion of vastness. Equally antagonistic to the view of Burke is that of A. C. Bradley, whose treatment of this topic, by far the most illuminating in the English language, was profoundly influenced by the opinions of von Hartmann. For him the essential feature of sublimity is a mental or material greatness with which we identify ourselves in imaginative sympathy; “whatever strikes us as sublime produces an

<sup>1</sup> *Longinus on the Sublime*, pp. 60, 61.

<sup>2</sup> Burke: *Essay on the Sublime and the Beautiful*, p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> J. Ruskin: *Modern Painters*, p. 44.

impression of greatness, and more—of exceeding or even overwhelming greatness”.<sup>1</sup>

Turning now to continental speculation on the subject, we find a similar hypothesis supported by J. Cohn; he maintains greatness to be the mark of sublimity, and it involves besides a certain discrepancy and incompatibility between an object's form and its content, the latter being too large and powerful for the former.<sup>2</sup> Külpe agrees that the notion of overwhelming greatness is common to all definitions of this concept, but urges that the object, not the subject, is qualified thereby, the *Einfühlung* type being an extremely rare phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> For Dessoir extensive or intensive size must be so great as to border the infinite, if it is to produce the effect of sublimity.<sup>4</sup> The account of the *Einfühlung* philosophers is, in its main features, actually identical to that of Bradley. For K. Groos this experience is characterized by “something powerful in a distinct and simple form”, which implies necessarily the projection of the self into the object; and power is tantamount to greatness, for spatial size is always transformed by the observer into energy and force.<sup>5</sup> For Basch it is the presence of a “mixed feeling”, the mingling of initial pain and subsequent pleasure, as well as quantitative greatness, that distinguishes the category of the sublime from that of the beautiful; the complete experience always presupposes the capacity for self-identification with art and nature.<sup>6</sup>

Lipps maintains that the feeling of sublimity is exclusively a feeling of our own power, the swollen strength of our own volition, which we project spontaneously into

<sup>1</sup> A. C. Bradley: *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, pp. 179-189.

<sup>3</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, pp. 168-172.

<sup>4</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 204-207.

<sup>5</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, pp. 309-340.

<sup>6</sup> V. Basch: *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, pp. 583-592.

the object; the might and power, the projection of which first creates sublimity, appear to us in nature as the sign and emblem of natural forces, in architecture as the overwhelming strength of abstract forms, in music as the stirring and expansion of striving that we detect in musical tones.<sup>1</sup> For Volkelt, whose study of the whole problem is unsurpassed for detail, comprehensiveness, and psychological insight, the sublime depends on the abnormal size of the content of the aesthetic object; now the quantitative expression occurring here signifies neither spatial nor numerical greatness, but only human greatness; and this refers not only to the intensity of psychic dispositions, conditions, and processes, but also to the level of their development and the degree of their value.<sup>2</sup>

The sublime has generally been conceded a position of supreme importance among the modifications of the aesthetic. This it owes to the fact that the intensity and the peculiar quality of our experience of the beautiful is nowhere more marked than in this sphere, where every feature of the entire aesthetic process is magnified and deepened. Sympathy with colossal force, or with immense power of thought, volition, or feeling, as they appear before us in the most stupendous works of art or nature, in a mountain chain or a Shakespearian tragedy, augments enormously the corresponding faculties in our own personality and so produces a joy that verges on ecstasy; while the overcoming of such personal emotions as the initial depression and fear we feel when the sublime object is openly hostile to our instinctive biological interests, an aspect of the experience specially stressed by Schopenhauer, brings into unique prominence the disinterestedness of the spectator and his complete if momentary emancipation from the practical attitude.

<sup>1</sup> T. Lipps: *Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 527-539.

<sup>2</sup> J. Volkelt: *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 107-108.

We have found pretty general agreement that sublimity belongs to the category of quantity, that abnormal size or greatness in real or imagined perception is its outstanding feature, and it requires no subtlety to perceive that the different senses in which the term is used have arisen from an exclusive emphasis on either the subjective or the objective aspect of the experience. Ruskin is right to stress the magnitude of the object, and to maintain that this concept applies as well to the spirit as to inert matter; if there is sublime grandeur in the heavenward aspiration of an Alpine peak or in the foaming avalanche of Niagara, no less stupendous and overpowering, in a more exalted sphere, is the moral grandeur of an Antigone, a Socrates, or a Jesus.

Right, too, and in no smaller degree, are Lipps and Volkelt when they insist that the overwhelming magnitude of the sublime is in truth the sublime greatness of human personality. For to rest content, as Külpe and Dessoir would have us, with the feelings of veneration and awe inspired by something that infinitely surpasses our ordinary standards, is not to overstep the initial phase of the experience; once this is traversed, once we have found ourselves by losing ourselves, we are free to identify our inmost soul with the object before us, the force of the torrent and the upward sweep of the mountain become the irresistible energy of our own volition, the heroism of Prometheus or Antigone is our heroism, the divine thirst of Faust is our thirst, the agony of Lear is our agony, ours is the insane jealousy of Othello, the noble but tortured soul of Hamlet, and the broken heart of Mrs. Alving.

In our view the emotion of terror described by Burke, and the resultant pain mentioned by Basch, are quite mythological when ascribed to the entire territory of the sublime. In the case of an immense conflagration, of a

hurricane at sea, of a tremendous thunderstorm, a shudder admittedly constitutes the preliminary and introductory stage of the experience, though it disappears as soon as the necessary detachment is achieved; but how could it ever arise in one who was listening to a mighty symphony of Beethoven or to the great mass of Bach, or gazing at the Sistine miracle of Michelangelo or on the incredible span of St. Peter's dome, or utterly lost in the unruffled expanse of a gently heaving ocean or the starry canopy of an open sky? To summarize briefly our findings on this score; the sublime resides in overwhelming magnitude, spiritual or material, of a definite and not incalculable order, and it includes, as well as the grandeur of the external object to which we attribute sublimity, that elevation of soul without which the noblest works of art and nature must remain for ever dumb.

## 2. THE TRAGIC

A complete history of the development of the concept of the tragic would, of course, start from some famous passages in the Poetics, but our intention is only to give the views expressed on this subject by some modern thinkers. J. Cohn describes the tragic very profoundly as the suffering and downfall of the sublime, or, more exactly, as the suffering of a valuable personality which preserves its nobility in spite of misfortune; in its essence, therefore, this particular category applies only to human beings.<sup>1</sup> Very similar is the opinion of Külpe. Sad events, he maintains, events in which something valuable is crushed while its value emerges victorious, if they unfold themselves from an inner necessity, produce on the spectator the effect of the tragic.<sup>2</sup> Groos has more in common with the ethical conception of Aristotle, for he

<sup>1</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, p. 190.

<sup>2</sup> O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, pp. 172, 173.

clings to the fallibility, the ἀμαρτία, of the hero or heroine. In a tragic situation we are witnesses of the terrible downfall of an interesting personality, and the pain arising from the emotions of pity and fear is mitigated by the logical and moral necessity of the catastrophe and by the sublimity of the hero and his fate.<sup>1</sup> Dessoir dismisses all narrow moralizing, and urges that tragedy springs from the inevitable conflict and dissonance between man and the world he inhabits, from the sad truth that the highest human values carry with them the seeds of dissolution, bitterest suffering, and even catastrophic disaster.<sup>2</sup>

With Lipps we return again to the ethical, the essence of the tragic being a revelation of the inner power of the good, "die innere Macht des Guten", in human personality; the purpose of tragedy is to enable us to enjoy through sympathy the power of goodness in a person, as it comes to light in suffering, and opposes itself actively to the forces of evil. We have the tragedy of fate whenever a personality, originally noble, is overwhelmed by a remorseless destiny, the tragedy of character whenever the latent goodness in an evil or morally indifferent individual is aroused through abnormal suffering.<sup>3</sup>

Volckelt, however, whose vast erudition and extraordinary subtlety of analysis render him second to none in the handling of this topic, adopts a very different standpoint from that of his eminent colleague. He distinguishes carefully three separate and outstanding features of the tragic; firstly, intense and abnormal suffering which leads its victim to ultimate disaster, through the destruction of the body or the collapse of the mind, or even through both in conjunction, secondly, real human greatness in the hero or heroine, a definite superiority to the average being

<sup>1</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, pp. 341-375.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, pp. 207-213.

<sup>3</sup> T. Lipps: *Der Streit über die Tragödie; Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 559-573.

that may be evinced either in power of will, or in strength of feeling, or in profundity of thought and imagination, and lastly, an unfolding of the whole plot such that the tragic fate of the individual becomes typical and representative of that of the species to which he belongs. He then proceeds to effect a division of the tragic founded on the special nature of the conflict it involves; according as it arises between the hero and the external forces that stubbornly oppose his efforts and aspirations, or within the confines of his own divided personality, we have ancient and modern tragedy, the tragedy of outer and that of inner conflict.<sup>1</sup>

A transition from the sublime to the tragic is natural enough, in view of the intimate relationship that binds the two together. The actual point at which sublimity crosses the boundaries of the tragic is to be found in the towering greatness of the tragic hero or heroine; but the domain of tragedy involves besides the collapse or downfall of the sublime figure, and, as this is inextricably bound up with human personality, it is restricted in its operation to the spheres of history, epic poetry, the novel, the short story, and the drama. The overwhelming sadness of certain pictorial representations of the crucifixion and entombment, of some sculpture of Michelangelo, of certain magnificent musical compositions, such as the First Symphony of Brahms or the Fifth of Tchaikovsky, may be justly said to contain the germ of profoundest tragedy, but, nevertheless, these great works do not possess all the features that we are entitled to associate with the perfected productions of the tragic muse. The inability of certain really representative arts, such as painting and sculpture, to portray the rise and fall of a tragic figure is due to the impossibility, for them, of depicting a whole succession of events in their true chronological order. They are

<sup>1</sup> J. Volkelt: *Ästhetik des Tragischen*; *Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 304-353.

only able to imprison the fleeting moment, as Lessing explained long ago in the *Laocoon*.

There can be little doubt that great and abnormal misfortune, misfortune that culminates in bodily death or spiritual annihilation, a trait ascribed very generally by aestheticians to the tragic event, is in fact one of its essential and outstanding characteristics. Ordinary sufferings, the little sorrows and disappointments that people everyday life, are simply sad, they first acquire the possibility of becoming tragic by reason of their overwhelming magnitude and bitter intensity. And this leads us immediately to the second obvious characteristic of a tragic episode, without which even the deepest suffering is only piteous, to the greatness of personality, the deviation from the vulgar and commonplace, it demands of the men or women who are to attain truly heroic dimensions. Of course, the greatness in question is as a rule borne by a single individual, male or female, but it may equally appertain to an immense number; the downfall of an ancient and splendid civilization, overrun by hordes of illiterate barbarians, is in itself a profoundly tragic spectacle, and so, too, the long-drawn agony of a nation, of a whole people, in time of war, sacrificing daily the fairest flower of its youth and blinded by the tears of innumerable lacerated hearts.

The superiority of the tragic hero is not a mere outer superiority, one of rank and social status, such as appears universally in dramatic tragedy until the time of Shakespeare; nor is it necessarily—and here we part company from Lipps—a moral superiority, nor—and here we differ from Groos and Aristotle—is the hero's downfall always a just and merited retribution for some crime or sin, however venal, he may have previously committed. For Caesar, Napoleon, Richard III, Macbeth, Hedda Gabler, are giants of unscrupulous ambition, ruthless cruelty, and



pure destructiveness, while the grandeur of such tortured souls as Lear, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, or Rose Berndt, lies simply and solely in their supreme capacity for suffering. And is not the most poignant tragedy of history and literature the story of those rare beings, unstained by any trace of egoism or duplicity, whose very nobility has made them the helpless victims of the mediocre multitude, are not the cruellest recorded tragedies the poisoning of Socrates, the crucifixion of Jesus, the execution of Antigone, the burning of St. Joan, the assassination of Jaurès, the death of Brand in the avalanche, the shooting of the Burgomaster of Stilemonde?

We have been able to agree with the two first aspects of the tragic sketched by Volkelt, but we must dissociate ourselves vigorously from the third. Whether or not the fate of the tragic hero is regarded as typical of humanity depends ultimately on the metaphysical and religious beliefs held by the individual, and these have nothing whatever to do with the domain of art; the unflinching optimist will not be dismayed by the destruction of values in time and space, while the pessimists will make the triumph of evil the very bulwark of their despair.

It would be well in conclusion to draw attention to the effect of the object on the mind of the spectator, to some peculiar features of the tragic in the purely psychological sphere. There can be little doubt that it produces in the onlooker a "mixed feeling", a blending and mingling of pleasure and pain in which the former ultimately predominates. The torture of the tragic spectacle is easy enough to understand, directly we take account of our sympathy with the sufferings of the hero,—not Aristotle's pity and fear, which are emotions felt for, rather than with, the sufferer—and the acute shock to our highest expectations caused by the destruction of something

eminently valuable. The supreme delight it affords has always been harder to explain. There is, however, a natural and universal satisfaction in raising ourselves, for however brief a span, to the level of these exceptional beings; we learn then what it is to be a man in the fullest sense. We are fortified, besides, by the sight of a soul that is stronger than tribulation and a courage that nothing can undermine; we hear and marvel that Hamlet's dying thought is for the people whose destiny he will never guide himself, that St. Joan bids the priest seek safety from the midst of the rising flames, that Jesus intercedes for those who have condemned Him to the slow torture of the Cross. And finally, it is a common and well-known psychological phenomenon that a mild stirring of the emotions, even when they are in themselves acutely painful and disagreeable, is more pleasant than a state of monotonous equilibrium and pure indifference to feeling.

### 3. THE COMIC

The nature of the comic has, perhaps, given rise to more dispute and difference of opinion among philosophers than any of the other aesthetic categories. In England Meredith has maintained the intellectualist theory of Schopenhauer, according to which the comic consists in a sudden perception of contrast and conflict between ideas; the "comic spirit" is a child of the momentary union of incongruous notions, it is "a laughter through the mind" from which all trace of emotion is rigorously banished.<sup>1</sup> Humour, on the other hand, is quite distinct from the wider genus to which it belongs on account of the sympathetic emotion that is stirred in us while we perceive some ludicrous incongruity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> G. Meredith: *An Essay on Comedy*, pp. 88, 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79, 80, 85.

For Sully, whose *Essay on Laughter* represents the most penetrating treatment of this subject in our language, we are bound to accept in the sphere of the comic a plurality of causes; the two main historical hypotheses, the theory of degradation or personal superiority, championed first by Hobbes and later by Bain, according to which the ludicrous consists in the degradation of some person of interest possessing dignity under circumstances that excite no other strong emotion, and the equally important theory of incongruity, supported by Kant and Lipps, according to which it resides in the sudden disappointment of an expectant attitude, are by no means mutually exclusive, for neither succeeds in covering the whole field of the laughable.<sup>1</sup> A similar view is propounded by Basch, who mentions three separate causes of the comic experience, two of which are the coexistence of irreconcilable concepts and the sense of personal superiority, and suggests that it is very probable we may be able to discover others besides.<sup>2</sup>

Groos is a modern adherent of the "sudden glory" school, for he believes that the comic comes into being whenever we perceive the absurdity of an object, and, at the same time, are conscious of a feeling of personal superiority.<sup>3</sup> Cohn, on the other hand, supports the theory of incongruity; he maintains that a contradiction is only comic when an expectation has been roused and disappointed, or a demand roughly negated by the outside world.<sup>4</sup> Such, also, is the opinion of Lipps in this matter, and he naturally enough excludes the comic from the sphere of the aesthetic; a comic effect is produced when, in the place of an expected significance or event, another

<sup>1</sup> J. Sully: *Essay on Laughter*, pp. 119-154.

<sup>2</sup> V. Basch: *Essai Critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, pp. 596-601.

<sup>3</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, p. 376.

<sup>4</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, p. 209; cf. also, O. Külpe: *Grundlagen der Ästhetik*, p. 175; L. A. Reid, *A Study in Aesthetics*, p. 360.

and a more trivial impression presents itself before our mind and sensibility.<sup>1</sup>

Volkelt, with his customary genius for compromise, has effected a factitious but subtle synthesis of the two great historical hypotheses. For the comic resides in the degeneration or collapse of an object possessing some definite significance, when such a spectacle is accompanied by a feeling of playful superiority, which prevents the impression of the ludicrous from being ruined by an outburst of strong emotion; on the subjective side it involves a feeling of tension, a feeling of alleviation or release, and a feeling of superiority such as we have already described.<sup>2</sup> And lastly, there is the ingenious but palpably mistaken effort of Bergson to reduce the infinite variety of comic effect to the failure of the human organism to adapt itself harmoniously to the conditions of existence, to the perception of "du mecanique plaqué sur du vivant", of a stiffness and clumsiness of mind or body that reduces a living person to the level of a mere thing.<sup>3</sup>

The comic shares with the tragic the common trait of appearing, at its full stature, in a corner only of reality, in no more than two provinces of the wide domains of art and nature; for human personality is to it as the very breath of life. We laugh, it is true, when we see a circus monkey dressed like a man or a fashion-plate of the days gone by; but the incongruous in nature can only provoke a smile by analogy and association with ourselves, and unaided by such recollections is as indifferent to mirth as it is to tears. Again, we may find delicious absurdity in a caricature, rustic gaiety in a quartette of Haydn, or boisterous humour in a Beethoven symphony, but the

<sup>1</sup> T. Lipps: *Komik und Humor*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 343-394.

<sup>3</sup> H. Bergson: *Le Rire*, pp. 1-22, 38.

rarest, subtlest, and most refined varieties of the ludicrous, the comic flavour most favoured by the connoisseurs, such as wit, irony, and humour, depend on a communication of ideas which can only be expressed and embodied in language; hence it is that the proper fields of the comic, in which alone it appears at its full stature, are poetry—narrative and dramatic—and human history, that is to say, real life in the present and the past.

Having thus delimited our entire sphere of operations, we can now proceed at once to ask ourselves the momentous question of what the phenomenon we are investigating actually consists. But let us point out before we go any further that a certain freedom from brooding seriousness, unwavering earnestness, and the real emotions of ordinary life, is an indispensable condition of admittance to the realm of the comic; for we cannot laugh at a mishap if the victim is really injured or at the discomfiture of others if their feelings are gravely wounded, or at ourselves unless we are able at moments to become the detached spectators of our common actions and even of our highest and noblest aspirations. If Shelley, as Matthew Arnold asserts, was really deficient in a sense of humour, it must have been because he could never tear himself away from his all-absorbing infatuation for beauty and the welfare of mankind. His was surely a venial sin!

A snare into which many have fallen is the equating of the comic and the risible; "everything is comic", says Müller-Freienfels, "at which we laugh".<sup>1</sup> The falsity of this opinion can be judged by a brief review of some kinds of laughter. There is, in the first place, the laughter of animal spirits, the natural emotive expression of a child or a savage who has just enjoyed a hearty meal; there is the nervous laugh, the laugh that breaks out willy-

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Bd. I, p. 230.

nilly on the most solemn occasions and borders on the hysterical; there is besides the laughter provoked by tickling the arm-pits or the soles of the feet, and the cruel, derisive, mocking laugh that crowns the defeat of an adversary. We should therefore be on our guard against a confusion between the comic and the risible that would prove fatal at the outset.

Passing now to the laugh and the smile that are sufficiently human and detached to belong to the aesthetic sphere, we are confronted by so vast and bewildering a variety that we are instantly forced to capitulate to a plurality of causes. The only common trait that we shall be able to discern is a laughter or an incipient laughter not merely physical in origin nor intimately bound up with practical interests; the comic is in essence the only truly human fun, the last stage in the long evolution of laughter, the laugh or the smile of the civilized man as contrasted with that of the barbarian or the child.

There can be very little doubt that a feeling of superiority, a sudden emergence of our natural egoism, is to a very great extent responsible for the delight people take in practical jokes, or, at a higher level, for our enjoyment of the flashing *quid pro quo*, and that the spice of malice is to be found throughout the ludicrous of art and ordinary life, in the verbal warfare of Beatrice and Benedict, in the satirical comedies of Molière, Ben Jonson, or Aristophanes, where the scourge of ridicule is used quite unsparingly, as well as in ordinary conversation, in the circus ring, or on the music-hall stage.

But it seems impossible to deny, at the same time, that a sudden shock to some natural expectation, such as the abrupt frustration of an expectant attitude by a clever comedian, may, without any reference whatever to our personal superiority or inferiority, suffice to release in us a volley of laughter. And how often does

some incongruity in the appearance of people or things provoke instantaneous mirth! Moving now from the sphere of the involuntary comic, the comic of character and situation in ordinary life and the *naïveté* of the child, to the higher sphere of its deliberate manufacture and production by individuals, we find here a far more delicate and complex state of affairs.

Wit is a product of a contrast and conflict between ideas, it is the purely intellectual aspect of the comic stressed by Meredith; a common and pleasing variety is the pun, the play on words loved so well by the Elizabethans, a yoking together of words that resemble one another in sound, but differ in sense and meaning. In irony, on the other hand, the meaning the speaker intends to convey contradicts the sentiments he is actually expressing, a double dealing of which the interlocutors are clearly aware and which is often conveyed by the tone of voice; Socrates was not in the habit of professing ignorance out of Christian humility. But irony almost always has a sting, whereas wit is as often kind or indifferent as it is cruel.

The place of honour among the individual varieties of the comic has been assigned, as a rule, not to the witty but to the humorous; and rightly so, for here the highest human values are seriously engaged. We do not merely laugh at and over a humorous character; we laugh with him, our pity is stirred, we participate imaginatively in his trials, his sorrows, and his triumphs; we are touched profoundly by the kindness of Uncle Toby, we are moved by the generosity of Mr. Pickwick, and we are attracted irresistibly by the unswerving loyalty of his faithful Sam.

But if one species of the humorous is the sympathetic with a comic flavour, another and a more important is to be found in the laughter of the true philosopher. It is

born of a contrast between the exceeding greatness and the infinite littleness of things; we meet it in the jarring bathos of Byron's Don Juan, in the Falstaffian denigration of courage and honour, in the fastening of Alceste to a flirt's apron-strings, in the juxtaposition of Don Quixote, the immortal spirit of chivalry, and the unimaginative, plebeian mediocrity of his companion in adventure. We are humorists when we are able to temper the bitterness of life by laughing long and loudly at ourselves, and not merely at our personal whims and idiosyncrasies, but at the solemn madness of those who dedicate their lives to impersonal ends, to an indefatigable pursuit of beauty and truth and perfection, in a world where philistine indifference, ruthless selfishness, senseless frivolity, and crass stupidity reign supreme; and in a universe where man himself, with all his marvellous works, is but a grain of sand in the vastness of an endless desert. Humour of this kind involves a rare capacity for complete detachment from practical and ideal interests, for the pure intellectual contemplation of reality in all its aspects, and as such it is the culminating point of the philosophical attitude; but in itself it is by no means purely intellectual, for the insistent claim of our sense of value and nobility in things lends it a background of deep and anguished sadness.

#### 4. THE BEAUTIFUL

The beautiful, in the strict and narrow sense of the term, is described by Groos as whatever furnishes immediate sensuous pleasure, pleasure to the eye and ear, in the aesthetic appearance.<sup>1</sup> According to Cohn, it is that particular modification of the aesthetic from which conflict is altogether absent.<sup>2</sup> Müller-Freienfels, who is

<sup>1</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, pp. 203, 204.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cohn: *Allgemeine Ästhetik*, pp. 167, 168.



primarily interested in the subjective aspect of the phenomenon, defines the beautiful as an experience of pleasure almost or completely undiluted.<sup>1</sup> The peculiarity of the beautiful, Dessoir writes, is that the self enjoys without any shade of hindrance or displeasure.<sup>2</sup> For Volkelt it is equivalent to pure pleasure, always derived from the perfect organic unity of the object.<sup>3</sup>

When an aesthetic experience brings us pure, pervading, unalloyed delight, without any trace of conflict, disharmony, or pain, we are entitled to call it an experience of beauty; this feeling of harmonious joy should not, however, be restricted, as Groos would have it, to sensuous pleasure, or even, as Volkelt maintains, to such delight as is produced by formal perfection alone. But what, we may ask, are the objective and external conditions of the appreciation of the beautiful?

In so far as the content of the work of art or natural object is concerned, it is represented by generic perfection, the ideal type, in the realms of the living and the inorganic; this is by no means equivalent to the typical, for it is not obtained by constructing an average person or thing, a kind of barber's block, but by combining in imagination, or perceiving in reality, those qualities that render the object without flaw in the performance of its special function. A golden glow of health radiates from the superb physique of the gods and goddesses of Phidias and even of Praxiteles, from the voluptuous nudes of Titian and Rubens; we are suddenly confronted by the perfect human animal. The noble and irreproachable figures that move in the tragedies of Sophocles, the stainless Iphigenia of Goethe, the super-human heroes of Corneille, these are the ideal of human

<sup>1</sup> R. Müller-Freienfels: *Psychologie der Kunst*, Bd. I, p. 233.

<sup>2</sup> M. Dessoir: *Ästhetik und allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. II, p. 24.

personality and character. The flower of feeling unfolds itself in the idyllic bliss of certain lyrics, in the atmosphere of peace, and happiness, and universal perfection that permeates the *Queen Mab* and the far greater *Prometheus Unbound* of Shelley, and, above all, in the serene and rapturous joy that floats, like a cloudless sky in summer, over so much of the music of Mozart, and Schubert, and Mendelssohn.

But this leads us from the content to the form of the object which absorbs us at the moment of contemplation. For the musicians we have just mentioned are distinguished by reason of the absence of discord and dissonance from their composition, for their flowing and mellifluous melodies, and for the simple and consonant intervals they use to harmonize them. Turning now from musical tones to light and colour, we find purity and harmony to be everywhere the characteristics of the beautiful in this sphere. There is a subtle blending of the sombre hues of a winter or an autumn landscape that rejoices the heart of the painter, a virginal loveliness in the rose, the lily, or the carnation that wins these flowers unfeigned and universal admiration; and the greatest of all the orchestrators of the palette, a Titian, a Tintoretto, or a Veronese, have exploited marvellously the splendour of the primary colours, alone or blended sumptuously with their fellows.

The shape or form of a thing is, however, often unmistakably beautiful without the aid of colour or illumination. Exact and obvious proportion, symmetry, the absence from lines of sharp or sudden turnings, these are the qualities that confer on objects beauty of shape. A Greek temple or a Queen Anne residence is beautiful, a Gothic cathedral, with its sublime defiance of the laws of proportion, simply magnificent. But the architectural style that belongs *par excellence* to the realm of beauty

is the rococo with its florid floral ornament, its wavy scrolls, its delight in the bending and breaking of lines to rob them of their natural severity.

And this brings us at last to an attractive and important variety of the beautiful, acknowledged universally in the sinuous and delicate curve, to the graceful; it shares with the entire genus to which it belongs absence of conflict, contradiction, or pain of any kind, but the impression of grace is produced in the spectator by a very definite class of objects. Spencer describes the graceful as being, in living bodies, an economy in the expenditure of force, and in inanimate things an analogy to such economy, whether in movement or at rest.<sup>1</sup> For Bergson it resides in a perception of a certain facility in external movements.<sup>2</sup> Volkelt maintains, on the other hand, that grace is the natural expression of the beautiful soul (in the sense of Goethe and Schiller), and that in so far as we credit lower animals, plants, or mere things with the quality in question, it is always by analogy to a harmony between the sensuous and the spiritual in man.<sup>3</sup>

We cannot, for our part, agree with the many who define grace as the perception of ease and facility of movement; for, though we are perhaps specially apt to associate grace and mobility, as when we delight in the lovely motions of a dancer or a skater, in the running of a deer or the flight of a swallow, and though, further, when we qualify a perfectly stationary object by the epithet of graceful it is probably by analogy with some other object in smooth and harmonious motion, there are certainly occasions when we find ourselves suddenly arrested by the spiritual grace of human personality in fact or fiction. There is probably, however, a common denominator to

<sup>1</sup> H. Spencer: *Essays*, Vol. II, pp. 381-386.

<sup>2</sup> H. Bergson: *Essai sur les Données immédiates de la Conscience*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 188-208.

the two sorts of grace; why should we not describe this phenomenon in its entirety as a perceived or imagined economy in the expenditure of force, psychic or physical?

This would embrace the beautiful soul as well as the beautiful body. Harmony and absence of conflict between the spiritual and the sensuous is more evident among women than among men, partly because their animal nature is less destructive, and partly because their spiritual nature aspires less high. A woman deeply in love blends exquisitely physical desire and rapturous affection for the man she adores, a harmony more rarely achieved by the coarser and more violent instincts of the male. Turning from life to literature, we find ourselves dazzled by the spiritual grace of Agnes, the good angel of David Copperfield, ever "pointing upwards", of Imogen, the loving and immaculate wife, of Dinah, the methodist saint in *Adam Bede*, or of the stainless Iphigenia of Goethe. And have we not all, at some precious moment in our lives, met with a living saint, a man or a woman whose face shines with the radiance of true holiness? We have already mentioned a few examples of the physical grace of nature; such an impression we receive whenever we notice an object engaged in apparently effortless and unimpeded movement, or a line or combination of lines that suggest activity of this kind. In the world of art this physical gracefulness is extremely widespread, and enchants us above all in the evolutions of the ballet dancer; in plastic art it is perhaps most notably manifest in the sinuous and supple draughtsmanship of Ingres, in the soft and flowing figures of Botticelli, and Raphael, and Leonardo, and Correggio, in the sculpture of the Greek decadence, and in the architecture and furniture of the eighteenth century.

## 5. THE UGLY

The opposite and contrary of the aesthetic, of beauty in the wider sense, is, not the ugly, but the aesthetically indifferent, whatever is too drab, plain, commonplace, or repulsive, to rouse in us the slumbering powers of artistic sympathy and formal appreciativeness. The ugly is in itself a prominent feature of our aesthetic experience, it does not, like the commonplace, fail to move us or even to attract our attention, and it is more naturally opposed to beauty in the strict and restricted sense than to any other modification of the aesthetic.

Groos, treating it as the contrary of the beautiful, describes this category as whatever is definitely unpleasant to the higher senses in the aesthetic appearance.<sup>1</sup> For Basch the representation of ugliness in art is amply justified by the law of contrast.<sup>2</sup> For Lipps that into which we project a disvalue or negation of life, conflict, weakness, or want, is ugly, and its essential function is to serve as a foil to the beautiful.<sup>3</sup> Dessoir allows ugliness both for its own sake, as a deliberate portrayal of vice or sickness, and as a setting to enhance the splendour of the beautiful.<sup>4</sup> Volkelt, on the other hand, regards the ugly as the anti-aesthetic, as whatever lacks altogether aesthetic value; this may happen either because an object conflicts with one of the great aesthetic norms, or because its nature is opposed to that of one of the categories of the beautiful. The opposite of beauty in the narrow sense is not the ugly, but the characteristic, or that which produces in us a feeling of pain and discomfort owing to the difficulties we must surmount before we are able to grasp the object as an organic whole.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> K. Groos: *Einleitung in die Ästhetik*, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> V. Basch: *Essai critique sur l'Esthétique de Kant*, p. 595.

<sup>3</sup> T. Lipps: *Ästhetik*, Vol. I, pp. 593-598.

<sup>4</sup> Dessoir: *Ästhetik*, pp. 213-215.

<sup>5</sup> J. Volkelt: *System der Ästhetik*, Vol. II, pp. 22, 26, 562-569.

Unlike the beautiful, our perception of the ugly in art or nature provokes a feeling of uneasiness and even of pain, which blends immediately with whatever satisfaction we may derive to compose a mixed feeling, an acrid delight, a pleasure definitely tinged and coloured by pain. It is essentially a product of the modern spirit, in the sense that we find it far more frequently after than before the Renaissance, and more at home in the atmosphere of romantic realism than in that of harmonious classical antiquity. Now what are the specific objective and external conditions of the experience of ugliness?

An object of this sort usually displays the oddities, the eccentricities, the foibles, the whims, that are the unmistakable mark of individuality, the physical deformities, the moral failings, the mental peculiarities, that distinguish so clearly one person from another; it expresses, not the ideal generic type, but, in a word, the characteristic. The poet of pure individual character, with all its defects and all its blemishes, is pre-eminently Shakespeare. In the novel we have only to call to mind such characters as Gwynne Plane, Rigoletto, and the hunchback of Notre Dame in Victor-Hugo, Dickens's Uriah Heep or the brutal Squeers, the epileptic Smerdiakov and the perverted Svidrigailoff of Dostoievski. In painting we have the drunken orgies of the Dutch genre, the bloated or emaciated figures of Rembrandt, Grünewald's "Crucifixion" or his "Temptation of Saint Anthony."

So much for the content or subject of an ugly thing; turning to its form, we find several notable peculiarities. One of these, in the case of musical tones, is the use of dissonant and jarring intervals, whether in succession or in unison, whether harmonic or melodic. The romantic composers have found their aid indispensable for the expression of the fullness of life, and since the time of Beethoven our ears are no longer shocked by sounds that

would have been intolerable to a contemporary of Mozart or Haydn. To dissonance in music corresponds the clash of colours in painting, the juxtaposition of shades that are neither sufficiently close nor sufficiently distant to harmonize. How often will a painter, to lend piquancy to a still life, or to portray the conflict and disharmony in human personality, use a subtle device of this kind !

We are unable to endorse the view of those who maintain that the sole function of ugliness is to act as a foil to beauty; its capacity for enhancing by contrast the splendour of the beautiful is certainly the most important and customary use to which it has been put by artists, but it is justified besides on its own merits as affording expression for the darker side of human personality. Yet we moderns are in danger of forgetting that the balance of feeling should always fall on the side of enjoyment; were this only remembered we should have less heartless cynicism on the stage, less dissonance in music, less attachment to the sordid, the brutal, the repellent sides of life in poetry and the novel. So much of contemporary art is spoiled by the morbid craving for ugliness.

## CONCLUSION

It would be well to summarize briefly, in a final chapter, the most important conclusions we have reached in the course of the foregoing pages.

What is aesthetics? It is *the science and philosophy of man's aesthetic experience* in all its shades, degrees, and ramifications, from the dawn of the artistic spirit in the brutelike mind of prehistoric man to its complete unfolding, released from the ballast of utilitarian interests, among the civilized peoples of every race inhabiting the earth, from the first crude efforts of the small child to enter the kingdom of art to the perfect flower of beauty in the supreme works of artistic genius; the recruits it enrolls in its service are drawn from many different countries on the map of human knowledge, from sociology and the history of art as well as psychology, from ethnology and anthropology as well as philosophy, for we have found it to be in turn psychological, objective, genetic, and metaphysical.

To maintain that its findings describe, but never prescribe, is to challenge its very existence as a science, for knowledge is power, as our command over nature bears witness, and to understand the causes and conditions of an event is to know the whole secret of its production.

Regarded as a member of the family of philosophical disciplines it is the youngest child, the Cinderella; for though the Greeks and the Hindus had already begun, in the infancy of Aryan thought, to speculate on the nature of art and beauty, aesthetics was first granted an independent status towards the end of the eighteenth century by a disciple of Leibniz, and its autonomy was then consecrated and confirmed by the famous study of Kant.

What are the outstanding and characteristic features



of our entire experience of the beautiful? Above all, it is *a disinterested and harmonious contemplation of the form and content of individual objects*. Disinterested and contemplative, in the sense that we no longer experience the spur of the biological instincts that drive us forward in the unending struggle for life, that we are released from the duties paramount in the sphere of conduct and from the thirst for knowledge that impels us towards the truth, that no irrelevant interest whatever disturbs our absorption in the unique object of contemplation, that, for a moment at least, we feel the beatitude of perfect peace. Formal, in the sense that it delights us to perceive proportion, symmetry, balance, harmony, or rhythm, to observe the mutual dependence of parts and their subordination to the whole wherein they belong, to detect similarity in difference, or, in the ancient formula, unity within variety, because in so doing we facilitate that act of perception which is itself an indispensable preparatory stage for the higher levels of the cognitive process.

But the real essence of the experience of beauty is not captured until the bare form has been transformed, until the skeleton has become alive, until, by the superabundant force and exuberance of our own vitality, we have animated the inanimate and humanized the sub-human, until the intensity of our artistic sympathy has peopled the great realm of nature and the greater realm of art with our own striving, and feeling, and emotion, and desire; then only, at the moment we have given ourselves without stint or reserve to the world, so completely that we are no longer conscious of the giver or even that the life of the object is simply the mirror of our own, do we penetrate the very arcanum of beauty, the holy of holies itself.

And finally, there is at the moment of creation or contemplation a marvellous and unique harmony between

the higher and the lower self, a fraternal co-operation between all the faculties of the human soul, a mingling of brute sensation, pure feeling, and imaginative desire of every sort and kind, with profoundest sympathy, intellectual awareness of the great human values, and utter freedom from practical and cognitive interests; the crowning miracle of beauty is that, whereas in conduct, in speculation, in worship, the lower self must be ruthlessly sacrificed to the higher, in art the natural and the truly human are perfectly reconciled, that man, at the apogee of his millennial development, in the perfect blossoming of his manhood, should be able to hallow and preserve the crude instinctive nature from which he springs.

It would appear from the foregoing that the beautiful, in its most essential features, is a special attitude of the human soul in face of things, an experience that transpires in the person of the artist or the artistic spectator, that, strictly speaking, beauty only exists in the universe at the actual moment of creative activity or appreciative delight; and in this sense it is, like goodness, and holiness, and truth, a state of mind, a quality of the soul, an attribute of the subject and not of the object, while we should nevertheless beware of forgetting that its birth is always conditioned by the material configuration and structure of the products of art and nature.

That artistic sympathy should have been our leading and most glorious theme is hardly surprising when one reflects that it is the special revelation, in the sphere of the beautiful, of that overflowing tenderness of heart, boundless compassion, and passionate disinterestedness of purpose, which are the pure and abiding essence of all the ideal values of life. If there is any perfect and final reconciliation between such diverse aspirations of the human soul as holiness and truth, between the irresistible attractiveness of beauty and the paramount appeal of freedom

and social justice, it is to be found, as the seers and the mystics and the poets<sup>1</sup> have always believed, in love; for this is at once the impulse that drives us ever onward in fulfilment of the high destiny of our race, that rescues constantly the truly human from the gross and worldly in our nature, that has kept alive throughout the ages the consuming thirst for spiritual perfection, and, at the same time, the rare and profound emotion that dwells at the heart of our inward experience of religion, saintliness, and art. Such, indeed, is the marvellous creative power that sanctifies and transfigures life, transforming it suddenly, as though at the touch of a magician's wand, from something vulgar and even trivial to a calling eminently noble and perpetually inspiring. The destiny of man on earth, and the growing core of the civilization he has planted there, is to realize ever more deeply and more abundantly this godlike creative passion, and so gradually to build a kingdom of pure and perpetual love, a world city, an Athens without slavery and with charity, in one small corner of the inexorable and pitiless empire of brute nature.

And when we asked of beauty the supreme and ultimate question addressed to circumstance by man, that it should illuminate from its own peculiar angle, with however feeble and flickering a light, the imponderable mystery of existence, we discovered that its unique and almost miraculous achievement was to create harmony out of discord, to reconcile the bitterest antagonisms and to convert conflict into peace, to resolve contradictions and to unify what in the length and breadth of human experience appears most diverse and most stubbornly opposed; for nowhere else does the sharp boundary vanish between the realms of the organic and the inorganic, nowhere else

<sup>1</sup> Thus Dante celebrates, in the *Vita Nuova*, the excellence of human love, in the *Divina Commedia* the surpassing excellence of love divine.

does the seemingly insuperable barrier between subject and object collapse, nowhere else does matter raise itself to the level of mind and mind descend humbly to the level of inert substance, nowhere else do the sensuous and the spiritual in the human soul, its instinctive, intellectual, and moral faculties, co-operate as naturally and harmoniously as the separate voices in a single jubilant choir. Can it, indeed, have been a mere coincidence that the greatest metaphysical aestheticians of the past century, Hegel, Vischer, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and von Hartmann, were, all alike, avowed monists and pantheists?



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